

Israel set to free 1,100 Palestinian prisoners

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (R) — Israel said on Wednesday it would free about 1,100 Palestinian prisoners under a peace deal with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO). Israeli Army Radio said they would be released next week. "The next release of Palestinian prisoners will amount to approximately 1,000 or 1,100 prisoners," Israeli spokeswoman Aliza Goren said. Mr. Goren said she did not know when the prisoners would be let go but army radio said an Israeli cabinet committee took the decision on Wednesday to free them in the middle of next week. A month ago the army said Israel was holding some 4,100 Palestinian prisoners. Palestinians say the number is closer to 5,000. "At this stage prisoners will not be released who murdered or wounded Israelis," a justice ministry statement said. Prisoner releases, while criticised by many Israelis, aim to bolster confidence on the Palestinian street in PLO leader Yasser Arafat's peace moves with Israel.

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Syria, Israel resume peace talks in the U.S. after a six-month hiatus

Both sides stress need to go forward

WYE PLANTATION, Maryland (Agencies) — After a six-month break in peace talks, Israel and Syria headed into negotiations Wednesday in a remote former plantation outside of Washington to isolate negotiators from the media.

Like the Bosnian peace talks in Ohio last month, these negotiations are to be held under a strict media blackout far from reporters' prying questions.

Negotiators made no comment as their cars swept into the 18th century plantation, now converted into a conference centre.

Both sides have stressed that this round will seek only to set broad outlines for future talks, skirting the contentious issue of an eventual Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights.

Hopes for real progress were heightened on both sides, especially after Syrian President Hafez Al Assad made a rare public statement in Cairo over the weekend saying he wanted to speed up the four-year-old peace process.

"I believe that (Israeli Prime Minister Shimon) Peres wants to deal with

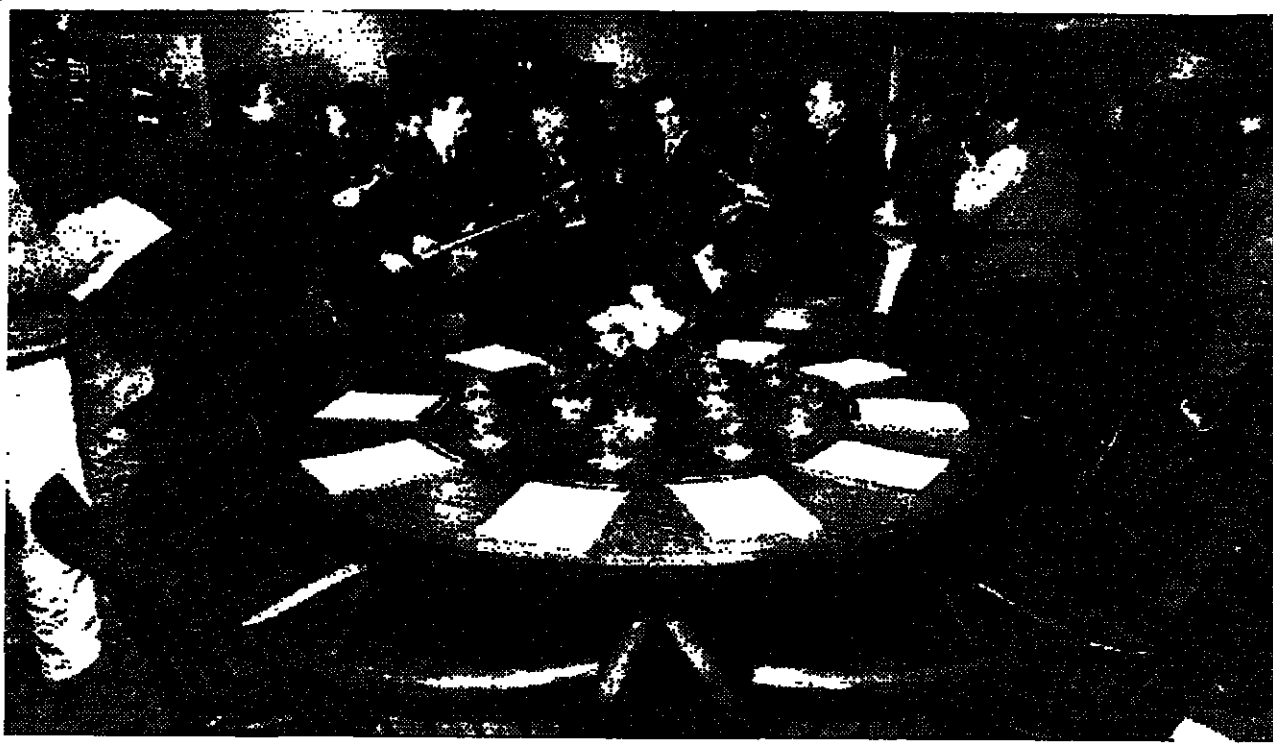
more openness ... this is what the Americans told us and this is what we concluded from his statements," Mr. Assad told a news conference.

"We do have expectations of the negotiations this time from the Syrians," Mr. Peres said in a television interview on Tuesday. "Perhaps not the substance, but the atmosphere from Damascus is positive."

The atmosphere of the talks is expected to be fostered by the remote meeting site, chosen in part to keep negotiators away from the hungry media outlets of Washington. Participants will sit around a bare mahogany table in front of a crackling fire at River House, a building at a conference centre about an hour's drive from Washington.

There were no assigned seats around the table, State Department spokesman Glyn Davies said on a press tour of the facility a few hours before negotiators arrived. "This is a preliminary meeting, so we're going to go light on the protocol," he said.

Asked why the windswept



U.S. State Department officials give the media a tour of the conference room and the table at the River House on Wednesday where peace talks between

Israel and Syria started. The talks will be held under a blanket news blackout (Reuters photo)

Lebanon conditions return to peace talks on progress on Syrian track

BEIRUT (R) — Lebanon said on Wednesday Israel must make clear its position on withdrawing its troops from South Lebanon for peace talks between the two countries to start again.

Foreign Minister Faris Bouez said success in Israeli-Syrian talks, which began on Wednesday in the United States, would reflect positively

on Lebanon's negotiations with the Jewish state.

"I hope we can hear in the appropriate time clear statements on the internationally recognised borders and on an Israeli full withdrawal that allows the Lebanese state to extend its authority over all its territories," Mr. Bouez told a news conference.

"I believe Israel has to

submit practical proposals allowing for negotiations ... statements that consist of a real invitation for the resumption of talks," Mr. Bouez added.

"We will follow very carefully the Syrian-Israeli talks and if there is success in these talks it will reflect on the Lebanese-Israeli track and will make us more confident in our hope to reach an

acceptable peace," Mr. Bouez added.

"Lebanon will be prepared to take part again in the peace process as soon as the Syrian-Israeli talks have reached an understanding, and not necessarily even an accord, and as soon as we are aware of the modalities of an Israeli retreat on the Syrian Golan," he told journalists.

Arab League urges homes for Palestinians in Jerusalem

CATRO (AFP) — The Arab League on Wednesday called on the international community to pressure Israel into allowing Palestinians to build homes in annexed East Jerusalem. The league highlighted in a statement "the need for international cooperation and pressure on Israel to make the Jewish state remove obstacles to the right of Palestinians in Jerusalem to obtain housing." "The policy of forced immigration and settlement used by Israel in the occupied Arab territories has been declared an illegal action by the international community." "It is a flagrant violation of human rights, threatening regional peace and undermining development in the region," the statement said, after being approved by Arab housing ministers meeting in Cairo. The statement, to be presented to a U.N. housing conference in Istanbul in June, stressed the "need to allow Palestinians in Jerusalem to build houses and get permits to build to preserve the Arab character of the town as well as the historic Arab-Islamic vestiges."

Israel quits Ramallah

RAMALLAH, West Bank (Agencies) — Israeli troops in Ramallah ended 28 years of occupation in a matter of minutes on Wednesday, completing the handover to Palestinian rule of six West Bank towns under a historic accord.

Hundreds of residents waved flags, cheered and hurled stones at departing Israeli jeeps as Palestinian police entered the town's police station and raised the Palestinian flag.

"We have taken over," the Palestinian governor of Ramallah, Abu Firas Liftawi, said outside the police station.

Israeli Cabinet Minister Yossi Beilin hailed the pull-out as an important milestone in Israeli-Palestinian relations.

"For years people like me have dreamt of this day when we would not control another people," he told Reuters. "Daily issues of the Palestinians are their responsibility from today on."

The town of Ramallah, just 12 kilometres north of Jerusalem, has extra significance to many Palestinians.

"Redeployment from Ramallah has special importance. It has traditionally been an economic and political centre and it is very close to Jerusalem," said Marwan Barghouti, a prominent member of PLO leader Yasser Arafat's Fatah organisation.

"I feel very happy the occupation is coming to an end in our land," he added.

Ten minutes after the Palestinians took over the police station, they moved into Ramallah's military headquarters, surprising everyone with the speed of the takeover from Israel.

"We just came here and found them gone. They left unexpectedly early. I am very happy, we are all happy," said another Ramallah resident Raja Barghouti.

Israel has in the last three months handed over Jenin, Nablus, Tulkarm, Kalkiya and Bethlehem as part of its September accord with the PLO to expand Palestinian autonomy beyond Gaza and Jericho, areas handed over last year.

"This is the beginning and not the end," said former Palestinian spokeswoman Hanan Ashrawi, who was working in Jerusalem at the time of the handover but whose house looks out onto Ramallah police station.

"I didn't miss redeployment and the celebrations, because I'm going to live them," she insisted.

Israel's West Bank army commander, Major General Gabi Ofir, called on his Palestinian counterpart Haj Ismail Jabr to maintain order so that Jews living nearby would feel safe.

"We want from you complete security in the city of Ramallah so that the Jews of Psagot can sleep in peace."

Jewish settler leaders living near Ramallah said they were worried about their personal safety despite a bypass road Israel has paved for settlers so they won't have to drive through town.

Settler leader Pinchas Wallerstein said it took his children 90 minutes Wednesday, instead of the usual 20, to get from their home in the settlement of Beit El to Jerusalem on the bypass road.

He said that for the first time, the children were driven in an armoured bus

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Yemen, S. Arabia to discuss borders

DUBAI (R) — A Yemeni team arrived in Saudi Arabia on Wednesday for talks on reestablishing border posts between the two countries, the official Saudi press agency said. Earlier this month, Yemeni sources reported fresh clashes along the disputed border but the Saudi defence ministry said they were untrue. Senior Yemeni and Saudi officials held talks in the wake of the reports to review progress in the work of committees charged with demarcating the border and boosting economic and other ties.

Arafat leaves Oman

MUSCAT (AFP) — Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat left here on Wednesday after agreeing with Oman to open diplomatic offices in each other's territories, officials said. Mr. Arafat, who held talks here on Tuesday with Oman's ruler, Sultan Qaboos, hopes to visit Saudi Arabia as soon as King Fahd has recovered from an illness that has kept him in hospital since November. Nabil Abu Rudeina, a senior PLO official, said the PLO leader is seeking to mend ties with Oman and other Gulf Arab nations angered by his perceived support for Iraq in the 1991 Gulf war.

Russian official visits Iran

TEHRAN (AFP) — Russian Deputy Prime Minister Oleg Davydov is on an official visit here to discuss long-term technical and economic cooperation with Iran, including the construction of a nuclear power plant, an official said Wednesday. Mr. Davydov, who arrived Tuesday, held talks with Iranian Economic Minister Morteza Mohammad Khan and they decided to have joint commissions from the two countries prepare documents on financial and technical cooperation.

Mediation efforts between Yemen, Eritrea run into trouble

DUBAI (Agencies) — Yemen and Eritrea were deadlocked on Wednesday in their dispute over three strategic Red Sea islands which an Ethiopian mediator warned was becoming increasingly "explosive."

Ethiopian Foreign Minister Seyoum Mesfin said neither side was prepared to pull back troops from the strategic Hanish archipelago and it would be difficult to push for a peaceful, political settlement.

Eritrean President Issaias Afewerki, in comments published by newspapers in Qatar, was even more downbeat. He said attempts by Ethiopia and Egypt to mediate in the conflict would lead to nothing.

Despite the negative assessment, Eritrea said it would release on Thursday

195 Yemeni soldiers captured during a battle last week for the Red Sea island of Hanish Al Kabir.

Girma Asmerom, the foreign ministry director for Africa, told AFP: "Starting tomorrow morning (Thursday), they will be in the hands of the International Committee of the Red Cross."

Eritrean forces captured Hanish Al Kabir on Dec. 18 after a three-day battle in which nine soldiers were killed.

In Sanaa, a Yemeni official renewed threats of military action to recover the volcanic island.

"The Yemeni people are angry. They are pushing the leaders towards the military option to recover Hanish Al Kabir," said the official, speaking on condition of

anonymity.

He accused Eritrea of installing sophisticated monitoring and jamming equipment on the Dahlia archipelago, 400 kilometres north of Hanish Al Kabir.

The official press in Sanaa warned that Yemen had not ruled out force. The daily Al Jumhuriya, urging the government not to show weakness of fear, said: "Yemenis are capable of recovering their despoiled rights by other means."

In public, however, the government said it was satisfied with the progress of mediation attempts.

Mr. Afewerki, in contrast, told the Qatari newspapers Al Arab and Al Watan that mediation "will lead to nothing because Eritrea believes that the Hanish archipelago belongs to it his-

torically."

The Ethiopian president, who described the mediation attempts as "straightforward diplomatic activity," defied Yemen to produce documents proving its ownership of the islands and said his government had its evidence.

His government denied reports that its forces were involved in a skirmish early Tuesday with Yemeni forces on the island of Jebel Zogor in the archipelago, saying they had not responded to firing from Sanaa's troops.

Asmara and Sanaa are also in dispute over Jebel Zogor and the neighbouring island of Lesser Hanish.

They all form part of archipelago of nine islands which guards the strategic straits of Bab Al Mandab at

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Secular Turk alliance looks set

ANKARA (R) — Turkish parties on Wednesday set about forming an oddball secular alliance to block Islamists from taking power after weekend elections but the animosity between party leaders already signals problems.

"I believe there will be a coalition soon — there are no top-level meetings at the moment but behind-the-scenes work is going on," said an aide to Prime Minister Tansu Ciller.

"But I don't think the coalition can last long and I can foresee new elections in less than two years," he told Reuters.

Ms. Ciller's True Path Party (DYP) and the rival conservative Motherland Party (ANAP) came in together behind the Islamists in Sunday's elections, taking around 40 per cent of the vote between them against the Islamist Welfare Party's 21.32 per cent.

Analysts fear a further power vacuum in Turkey — where there has been only stop-gap rule since Ms. Ciller's right-left coalition collapsed in September — if the conservatives cannot unite.

Ms. Ciller and ANAP leader Mesut Yilmaz announced on Tuesday that they had agreed on an alliance, with backing from one or two left-wing parties in the new five-party parliament.

The alliance, dubbed ANAYOL, has been long called for by the business community and media to deal with Turkey's economic ills such as 80 per cent annual inflation and slow privatisation.

But deep rivalry and resentment between Ms. Ciller and Mr. Yilmaz stopped them uniting in September to replace the collapsed government. ANAP and the left led the way in sinking Ms. Ciller's minority rule in a parliamentary vote of confi-

dence.

Their rival bids for the top post could stop them again. "Since all four leaders are saying ANAYOL there should normally be no government problem," columnist Bilal Cetin wrote in the liberal Yeni Yuzul daily.

"But there is a very serious problem that no one has yet mentioned who will be prime minister in this government?... The tactical battle between Ciller and Yilmaz has already begun."

Mr. Yilmaz, apparently more concerned that Ms. Ciller does not regain her post, said late on Tuesday a third person may have to be chosen as prime minister to avoid a leadership battle.

"I would be happy if Ciller is persuaded to join a coalition under my premiership," Mr. Yilmaz told a television news programme.

"But she has the right to object. In this case, we would have to agree on someone

other than the two of us."

He kicked off the alliance talks by meeting leftist leader Bulent Ecevit, which analysts say is a manoeuvre to grab the initiative and present a united front against Ms. Ciller. Her party won more seats despite being fractions of a percentage point behind in the popular vote.

Mr. Yilmaz is due to meet Mr. Ecevit again on Thursday, while no further talks with Ms. Ciller were immediately scheduled.

Israel concerned over Islamists' win

In Tel Aviv, Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres was concerned over the rise of Turkey's Islamist Welfare Party in weekend elections and hoped the state would remain secular.

"There is no doubt we are following with concern the rise of the fundamentalist party in Turkey," Mr. Peres told Israel radio.

Damascus Declaration ministers meet

DAMASCUS (AP) — Eight Arab foreign ministers began a two-day meeting Wednesday to discuss the Middle East peace process and other major issues affecting the Arab World.

Syria expects to secure support for its position in peace negotiations with Israel, which were scheduled to resume in Washington Wednesday after a six-month stalemate.

Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk Al Sharaa said he was optimistic about the renewed negotiations, but did not elaborate.

Ministers from the six member Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) — Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman and Bahrain — were joined by the foreign ministers of Egypt and Syria for the parity.

All these states are members of the so-called Damascus Declaration group, which was formed in the immediate aftermath of the 1991 Gulf war to develop security and political links. They were allied against Iraq after it invaded Kuwait in 1990.

Under the initial agreement in March 1991, Syria and Egypt, which have the two most powerful military forces in the Arab World, were to provide troops to defend the Gulf states in return for financial aid of up to \$10 billion. But that agreement was soon shelved and remains so.

Still, Saudi Arabia's foreign minister, Prince Saud Al Faisal, said when he arrived in the Syrian capital that the meeting will endorse a document for joint action on key issues. He did not elaborate.

Deputies complain of price hikes

By Sa'eda Kilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Deputies Wednesday showered the government with complaints over price hikes and poverty during a Lower House of Parliament session that ended before schedule because it lost quorum.

But the government maintained silence over the complaints, which were raised before the House started its debate of the Draft Labour Law and the House's draft bylaws.

Some deputies, focussing on their constituencies' needs, urged the government to take action to put an end to the continuous rise in prices and help in alleviating poverty in the Kingdom. In the question/answer period at the beginning of the session, Deputy Hatem Ghazawi complained from what he described as the farmers' poor situation due to the country's importation of the same fruits and citrus fruits that are produced by Jordanian farmers in quantities that meet the local demand.

"(The government) has recently allowed the importation of (1200 tonnes of) bananas though there is a balance in supply and demand of this commodity in the local market," deputy Ghazawi said. "We fear that this method would be applied again."

"I hope our borders would be closed in front of the importation of citrus fruits to boost the confidence of the Jordanian farmers, who impatiently await the coming of this season to sell their own production," he continued.

Islamic Action Front Deputy Mohammad Haj protested against the confiscation of olive oil which Jordanian travellers who come from the West Bank bring with them," he said. The travellers bring the oil as gifts to their parents and friends and not for commercial

reasons.

Another IAF Deputy, Basam Emoush, complained from what he saw as the steep rise in prices. He said that the prices of more than 150 commodities, including basic commodities such as milk, eggs and meat have risen to a large extent while some brands of medicine were not available in the drugstores all over the Kingdom.

"The citizen is complaining now in a gentle way and is adopting legal methods," Dr. Emoush said.

"I hope the Cabinet would convene in an urgent meeting to discuss the issue and draft a proposal to put an end to the merchants' monopolies and (control of) prices," he said. "I am sure Prime Minister Sherif Zeid Ben Shaker would respond positively to this demand."

During the session, the House also discussed the draft Labour Law, which was sent back by the Senate after it introduced amendments to some of its articles. The House approved some of the Senate's changes but rejected others. The draft law will now be referred back to the Senate for endorsement. However, if the Senate insisted on all amendments, then both Houses will convene in one session to discuss the draft law.

The House resumed discussions of its proposed new bylaws but the debate was cut short as the session lost quorum prompting House speaker Sa'ad Hayel Sour to end it. The House agreed last week to make Wednesday's session a lengthy one to speed up work on the draft bylaws. Last Sunday, the session ended before schedule because of the loss of quorum.

The discussions of most of the bylaws articles, which govern the work, performance and the powers of the

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Qatar says will not quit GCC

CAIRO (Agencies) — Qatar's foreign minister said Wednesday his country would not withdraw from a Gulf Arab alliance over a dispute with powerful neighbour Saudi Arabia but would work to overcome differences with its neighbours.

Qatar's delegation walked out of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) summit earlier this month in protest at the appointment of a Saudi national, Jamal Al-Hujailan, as secretary-general instead of Doha's candidate.

It further angered its allies by threatening to boycott all GCC and other Arab meetings that Mr. Hujailan — who is to assume his post in March — attends as secretary-general.

"Qatar will not withdraw or boycott and we hope to solve this issue in a brotherly framework between Qatar and Saudi Arabia and in the cooperation council, because strong and deep ties bind us," Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad Bin Jassim Al Thani told reporters after meeting Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak.

"We think we will over-

come this crisis with the wisdom of the leaders in the GCC. Qatar does not want to prolong this issue or make too much of it," he added.

Sheikh Hamad's visit to Cairo is part of Qatar's diplomatic offensive to break Doha's growing isolation in the region since it boycotted the summit's closing session in Oman Dec. 6.

He visited the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Oman — Qatar's traditional supporters in the GCC — earlier this week to diffuse the crisis but said Doha had not changed its stance.

Bahrain, which like Saudi Arabia and Kuwait is often at odds with Qatar, turned down a request by Sheikh Hamad to visit Manama.

After the summit walkout, Mr. Mubarak told Qatar that it would be the loser from any boycott and advised it against widening any differences in the alliance. He did not attend the Cairo news conference, which Sheikh Hamad held with his Egyptian counterpart Amr Moussa.

Sheikh Hamad told reporters: "We are talking of some legal points. In any grouping,

such as the European Union or others for example, points of difference arise but this does not mean there are problems or a crisis," Sheikh Hamad said.

The former Qatari emir, Sheikh Khalifa Bin Hamad Al Thani, who was deposed by his son in a bloodless palace coup in June, is on his own regional tour.

On Wednesday, he held talks with Bahraini leaders in Manama to drum up support to help him regain power.

Sheikh Khalifa arrived in Bahrain on Monday from the United Arab Emirates.

The official agency GNA said he met Wednesday with the head of the chamber of trade and industry Ali Ibn Yusuf Fakhro and other members of the organisation.

Housing Minister Sheikh Khaled Abdallah Al Khalifa took part in the talks in which Sheikh Khalifa stressed the "historic relations between the two countries, mainly in the area of commerce."

On Tuesday the Sheikh was guest of honour at a banquet organised by the Bahraini Crown Prince

Sheikh Hamad Ibn Issa Al Khalifa.

According to members of his group, Sheikh Khalifa will travel to Saudi Arabia from Bahrain and then to other countries of the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Sabah Al Ahmad Al Sabah said in remarks published by newspapers that he would be "welcome" if he went to Kuwait.

The deposed ruler said Sunday in Abu Dhabi that he would return to his country soon to take up the reins of power again.

Sheikh Hamad said the reception the GCC states have given the former emir may be connected to Qatar's row with them.

"I assure you that the situation in Qatar is more than stable and we are not harmed by Sheikh Khalifa's tours. We wish him well and hope he will consider rest during this trip and that he thinks of the possibility of returning to his country Qatar," Sheikh Hamad added.



PALESTINIAN FESTIVITIES: Palestinian women Wednesday dance with a headdress (Kiffeyeh) as they celebrate the end of the 28-year Israeli military occupation of the West Bank city of Ramallah (see story Page 1) (Reuters photo)

Palestinian police 'illiterate, trigger happy' — Israel army

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — A confidential Israeli army manual issued to troops serving on the West Bank describes Palestinian police as "illiterate" and "trigger happy," state radio said Wednesday.

A copy of the 12-page manual, dated "Recommendations for Israeli soldiers in their relations with Palestinian police," was obtained by the radio.

The cover of the manual reads "confidential" and includes the emblems of the Israeli army division posted on the West Bank and the Israeli-Palestinian Liaison Committee.

On a page with the heading "Who is the Palestinian policeman," he is described as "illiterate" and "trigger happy," and "does not know the Oslo (peace) accords but will quibble on each of its points."

The manual adds the Palestinian policeman "is

incapable of reading a map, which can be used to our advantage to put up barriers in various sectors."

"The Palestinian policeman has a short memory, likes to play with his gun to show off his virility, only reacts to gut instincts and not reason, and gives evasive responses," the manual said.

According to the authors of the army guide, "Palestinian police act like gangsters and will not hesitate to take the side of protesters in clashes with Israeli soldiers."

"The Palestinian police officer must be forced from his bed when an incident requires his presence in the field," the manual says. "His rank is given arbitrarily."

General Gaby Ophir, commander of Israeli troops in the West Bank, confirmed the existence of the manual, but said it was

written a year ago and has since been withdrawn.

"This year the relations between Israeli soldiers and Palestinian police has been very positive. We plan to collect all these manuals because their contents are no longer valid," he said.

An army spokesman said that "Palestinian police are not described in a racist manner in the manual."

After the manual was publicised, the council of Jewish settlers on the West Bank and Gaza Strip, called on the government to "seriously reconsider the point describing Palestinian police as trigger happy before providing them with more weapons."

The Peace Now movement said the manual should be immediately withdrawn and a new version printed "because of new realities on the ground and the good cooperation between the two sides."

Policemen cross into self-rule areas

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — About 115 Palestinian policemen crossed the self-rule areas in Gaza and the West Bank.

Israel started pulling out its troops from major Palestinian cities in the West Bank, ending 28 years of occupation and paving the way for Palestinian police to take control in the cities of Jenin, Tulkarim, Kalkiya and Bethlehem. Israel was scheduled to vacate Ramallah Wednesday.

The Israeli redeployment from Hebron is expected to take place in March.

Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, including Arabs in East Jerusalem, are expected to take part in polls to be held Jan. 20 to elect 83 members for the self-rule council, which will govern the self-rule areas.

Mr. Khateeb told the Jordan Times that some units of the Jordan-based Palestinian Liberation Army will enter the West Bank soon. No date was given for their entry.

The entry of the group comes in line with accords

signed by Israel and the Palestine National Authority (PNA), which is controlling the self-rule areas in Gaza and the West Bank.

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Al Quds editor jailed for 'offending' Arafat

JERUSALEM (R) — Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) security forces have arrested an editor at the Palestinian newspaper Al Quds for not printing a report about PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat on the front page, journalists and security officials said Wednesday.

A journalist at Al Quds, the top circulation Palestinian daily, said Maher Al Alami was summoned to PLO-ruled Jericho by security officials on Monday but had not returned to Jerusalem.

Security officials confirmed that Mr. Alami, an editor at the Jerusalem-based daily for

20 years, had been arrested but refrained from giving reasons.

"Officials from Arafat's office called Alami on Sunday night and asked him to print a report on a meeting between Arafat and the Greek Orthodox patriarch on the first page," the journalist said. "But by mistake and because the first page was loaded with Arafat news, the report was published inside."

Mr. Arafat visited Bethlehem to join Christmas celebrations on Saturday, days after Israeli troops withdrew under a September accord expanding Palestinian autonomy in the West Bank.

PLO officials said Mr. Arafat was received by Patriarch Theodoros I who gave Mr. Arafat symbolic custody over Christian holy sites in Jerusalem.

"Apparently this was important for Arafat, and he wanted the report on the paper's first page," said the journalist, who asked not to be identified.

Mr. Arafat's authority has shown increasing intolerance with the press since its takeover in 1994. Al Quds and other Jerusalem and Gaza based newspapers have been closed more than once and several journalists were arrested in the past 18 months under Palestinian rule.

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Egypt's militant violence in '95 takes highest toll ever

CAIRO (AFP) — Muslim militant violence in Egypt took its highest toll since 1993, as armed extremists and police heightened their campaigns to eliminate one another.

But as the government took the upper hand in the battle at home, fundamentalists changed tactics by staging a string of dramatic attacks abroad, starting with a failed attempt to assassinate President Hosni Mubarak.

A total of 930 people have been killed in militant violence since March 1992: 375 of them this year, up from 283 in 1994 and 200 in 1993, according to an AFP tally of police reports.

Violence dropped off towards the end of 1995, from an average 38 people killed monthly from January to August, down to 17 a month from September.

Police policemen died in 1995 — 87 compared to 105 the year before — while the number of extremists killed

rose from 135 in 1994 to 187.

But killings of civilians leaped to 91, more than twice the previous year.

"Success against (militants) inside Egypt, which has foiled their criminal plans, has led the terrorist leaders to target Egyptian symbols and interests abroad," Interior Minister Hassan Al Alfi said in November.

The June 26 gun ambush on Mr. Mubarak in Addis Ababa, claimed by the main Egyptian militant group Gamaa Islamiyah, marked a turning point for Cairo's strategy against extremists, as it began targeting their "international arms."

Egypt blamed Sudan for supporting the attack, from which Mr. Mubarak escaped uninjured, and accused it of serving as a training ground for militants in Egypt.

Meanwhile, Mr. Mubarak warned nations that

Egypt accuses of harbouring militant leaders, especially Britain, Denmark and Switzerland, saying they would "pay a heavy price one day."

"These terrorists are active on British soil where they hold meetings and give orders for missions. All the attacks have been planned from outside" Egypt, Mr. Alfi said in November.

Efforts to win extradition of militants also focused on Yemen and Pakistan, which the Cairo press charges is the home to 600 Egyptian extremists. More than 10 militants have been returned since Pakistan signed a treaty with Egypt in 1994.

The Gamaa and Jihad, Egypt's other main extremist guerrilla group, responded with a string of attacks abroad in late 1995: The bombing of Egypt's embassy in Pakistan, killing 17, the murder of an Egyptian diplomat in Geneva

and a bombing in Croatia.

The International Justice Group, a new formation reported to group Jihad, Gamaa and other militant leaders abroad, vowed to shed "waterfalls of blood" in its campaign against Egypt and "countries plotting with it."

Meanwhile, inside Egypt, security forces harshened their campaign and succeeded in eliminating large numbers of Gamaa and Jihad leaders.

Ground zero for violence was southern Minya province, where several towns have been under a crippling curfew for over a year.

Despite heavy blows from police, militants have doggedly kept up their attacks only to vanish into the shelter of sugar cane fields. In September, militants decapitated a civilian victim and hung his head in a village market.

"Both sides changed tactics this year and decided to work for the total liquidation of the other," human

rights lawyer Hisham Mubarak told AFP.

The first of many militant leaders fell in April when police shot dead Bashir Kamal, the Gamaa head of all of south Egypt, after a 10-month manhunt.

Since then several "major plots" have been broken up, said by police to be directed from Sudan, including a plan to blow up parliament during a speech by Mr. Mubarak in December in which 54 were arrested, including a naturalised British citizen.

Although 25,000 militants are in prison by unofficial counts, "arrests were fewer this year because police focused more on elimination and there were fewer cadres left to arrest," Hisham Mubarak said.

"Next year will see a temporary period of calm as militants reevaluate their situation. But afterwards violence will return even stronger," he predicted.

Ghali meets Kuwait emir

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — U.N. Secretary General Boutros Ghali Wednesday held talks with Kuwaiti rulers on his first trip to the Gulf emirate since being appointed in 1992.

He met with Emir Sheikh Jaber Al Ahmad Al Sabah and Crown Prince Sheikh Saad Al Abdullah Al Sabah as well as parliamentary speaker Ahmad Al Saadun, the official agency KUNA said.

Their talks were dominated by the issue of the 600 Kuwaiti prisoners of war held by Iraq, and the return of Kuwaiti property taken by Iraqis during their seven-month occupation which ended in February 1991.

Dr. Ghali, who arrived late Tuesday, was also to discuss Iraq's implementation of U.N. resolutions adopted after its August 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

On Thursday the U.N. secretary general is due to inspect the U.N. observation mission for Iraq and Kuwait (UNIKOM) along the two countries' common border.

Islamist lawyers demand jailing of actress Yousra

CAIRO (AFP) — Two Islamic fundamentalist lawyers went to court Wednesday to demand imprisonment for one of Egypt's most famous actresses for appearing "almost naked" in magazine cover photos.

The case brought in a misdemeanor court in the Nile Delta is the latest in a line of suits by fundamentalist lawyers against films, books and even movie posters which they say violate Islamic standards.

The legal battle has accompanied a campaign by Muslim radicals to impose Islamic rule in Egypt which has left more than 870 people dead since 1992. Secular intellectuals have charged the revolt has made officials wary about standing up to law suits as a moderate expression of Islamic activism.

The suit by Abdul Fatah El Wafay and Aymun Abul Fetouh charges pictures of the actress Yousra in the weekly Arabic magazine Cinema and People of Nov. 18 violate Egypt's publication law.

"The picture is scandalous, almost naked, which goes

completely against morals, art, the law and the Islamic laws," the attorneys said in their written presentation to the court.

Yousra's two pictures on the magazine cover are tame by Western standards, showing her in silk negligees with her arms and legs bare.

The lawyers also accused three of the magazine's editors of violating the publication law, which allows prison sentences of up to two years and fines up to 500 pounds (\$147) for distributing indecent publications or pictures.

The court in Dammanhour, 130 kilometres north of Cairo, took no action Wednesday, postponing the case to Feb. 4 for administrative reasons, lawyer El Wafay told the Associated Press. He and Abul Fetouh are from Dammanhour.

The pictures in question were scenes from Yousra's latest film, "Birds of darkness." The successful movie is one of several with comedian Adel Imam that speak out against Islamic extremism. A suit was also filed charging the film unfairly portrayed attorneys.

JORDAN TELEVISION
Tel: 721110

PROGRAMME TWO
13:40 Tel — The Happy Professor
13:45 The Album Show
13:50 The New Legend to Beaver
13:55 The White Plague
14:00 The Album Show
14:05 The New Legend to Beaver
14:10 The White Plague
14:15 The Album Show
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23:55 The White Plague
24:00 The Album Show

PRAYER TIMES
05:04 Fajr
06:26 Sunrise
11:33 Dhuhr
14:17 Asr
16:00 Maghrib
18:25 Isha

CHURCHES
St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweikha, Tel. 810730

WEATHER
Bullshit supplied by the Department of Meteorology.
It will be relatively hot and sties clear. It will be foggy in the early morning. In Amman, it will be partly cloudy and seas calm. Winds will be northwesterly moderate.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

AMMAN
5/4
Aqaba 11/24
Deserts 3/12
Jordan Valley 9/23

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS
NIGHT DUTY
AMMAN: Dr. Hanna Mansour 750197
Dr. Adnan Zaghoul 898140
Dr. Jamal Jharab 847351
Dr. Abdul Hadi Tayyin 630115
First pharmacy 661012
Ferdows pharmacy 778336
Al Asena pharmacy 637055
Nairoukh pharmacy 626772
Al Selam pharmacy 636730
Yacoub pharmacy 640945
Shamici pharmacy 637660
Nairoukh pharmacy 626772
Najih pharmacy 847632

IBRD: Dr. Ahmad Qanu 281741
Al Quds pharmacy (—)

ZARQA: Dr. Samir Lawzi 989601
Khalifah pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES
Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Immediate 637111
Rescue 630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 637101
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 624002
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 630321
Hotel Complaints 605800
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage 897467
Complaints 787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 771111
Radio Jordan 771111
Water Authority 680100
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power Company 636381
RJ Flight Information 08-53200
Queen Alia Int. Airport 08-53200

HOSPITALS
AMMAN: Hussein Medical Centre 813813/32
Khalidi Maternity, J. Amn 642816
Akileh Maternity, J. Amn 642412
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Malhas, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shamsi 607071
Sanctuary Hospital 669131
University Hospital 843845
Al-Musader Hospital 667279
The Islamic, Abdali 666127/7
Al-Ahli, Abdali 664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajir 777103/3
Al-Basir, J. Ashraf 775112/6
Army, Shamsi 891115
Queen Alia Hospital 602240/50
Amal Hospital 607155
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 865199

ZARQA: Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital (09)983323
Jib-Sin Hospital (09)986732
Al Hikam Modern Hospital (09)989990
IBRD: Princess Basma Hospital (02)272555
Greek Catholic Hospital (02)272725
Jib Al-Nadous Hospital (02)274100
AQABA: Princess Haya Hospital (03)314111

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
12:40 Abu Dhabi, Doha (GF)
12:40 Sharjah (AH)
13:00 Riyadh (SV)

ARRIVALS
Royal Jordanian (RJ)
Flights (Terminal 1)
04:00 Singapore, Kuala Lumpur (RJ)
07:20 Sana'a (RJ)
08:20 Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)
09:20 New Delhi (RJ)
10:20 Beirut (RJ)
11:20 Athens (RJ)
12:20 London (RJ)
13:20 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
14:20 Cairo (RJ)
15:20 Larnaca (RJ)
16:20 Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
17:20 Athens (RJ)
18:20 Casablanca, Tunis (RJ)
19:20 Bangkok, Calcutta (RJ)
20:20 Al Ain, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
21:20 Rome (RJ)
22:20 Larnaca (RJ)
23:20 Jeddah (add) (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)
04:00 Abu Dhabi, Al Ain, Muscat (GF)
07:20 Athens (AH)
08:20 Riyadh (SV)
09:20 Istanbul (GT)
10:20 Doha (CK)
11:20 Cairo (MS)

DEPARTURES
Royal Jordanian (RJ)
Flights (Terminal 1)
04:00 Beirut (RJ)
07:20 Moscow (RJ)
08:20 Abu Dhabi, Al Ain (RJ)
09:20 Sana'a (RJ)
10:20 Dhahran, Riyadh (RJ)
11:20 Rome (RJ)
12:20 Paris (RJ)
13:20 London (RJ)
14:20 Athens (RJ)
15:20 Jeddah (add) (RJ)
16:20 Cairo (RJ)
17:20 Larnaca (RJ)
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21:20 Bangkok, Calcutta (RJ)
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Other Flights (Terminal 2)
04:00 Beirut (RJ)
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16:20 Cairo (RJ)
17:20 Larnaca (RJ)
18:20 Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
19:20 Athens (RJ)
20:20 Casablanca, Tunis (RJ)
21:20 Bangkok, Calcutta (RJ)
22:20 Al Ain, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
23:20 Rome (RJ)

MARKET PRICES
Upper/lower price in fils per kg.
Apple 700/300
Banana 650
Banana (Mozambique) 620
Banana (imported) 600/100
Cabbage 100/50
Carrot 260/150
Cauliflower 110/50
Cucumbers (large) 200/120
Cucumbers (small) 350/220
Eggplant 200/100
Garlic 750/500
Grape Fruit 220/130
Lemon 250/180
Marrow (large) 200/150
Marrow (small) 250/150
Onion (green) 220/150
Onion (dry) 230/150
Orange 540/400
Pepper (hot) 260/180
Pepper (sweet) 260/180
Potato 260/180
Radish 150/80
Spinach 120/80
String Beans 350/450
Tomato 270/200
Tomato 170/100

مكتبة احياء التراث



Ministry of Education Secretary General Izzat Jaradat Wednesday inspects progress at an examination hall where the country's students are taking their Tawjihi examinations. (Petra photo)

Ministry reports smooth progress on first day of national exams

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Ministry of Education Wednesday reported that there were no problems reported on the first day of the Tawjihi examinations which took place in all governorates across the Kingdom.

A ministry official told the Jordan Times that seven students took their examinations in hospitals due to their inability to be discharged from hospital, and that 11 deaf and dumb students took their exams at special education centres under the supervision of specialists.

A central operations room at the ministry in Amman monitored the progress of the examinations, the official said.

Ministry Secretary General Izzat Jaradat who toured a number of examination halls in the Amman region, said he spoke with students who told him that exam questions were not so difficult.

Dr. Jaradat said the operations room at the ministry was in constant touch with various departments of education around the country.

Education Department officials in various governorates toured examination halls in their respective regions to supervise the process.

A total of 7,500 teachers have been assigned to start correcting answer sheets Friday in centres set up specifically for this purpose in Amman, Irbid, Zarqa, Balqa, Kerak and Ma'an.

The exams, which are scheduled to end on Jan. 6, are in the scientific, literary, commercial, agricultural and vocational streams.

This is the first phase of the Tawjihi examination. The second will take place in May 1996.

According to an earlier announcement by the Ministry of Education, this is the last time a two-phase Tawjihi examination will take place.

As of next year, Tawjihi examinations will be taken once at the end of each scholastic year.

Prince Abdullah opens university extension

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Prince Abdullah Ben Al Hussein Wednesday inaugurated the new extension to the Isra'a University where the faculties of sciences, medical sciences and pharmaceutical studies are to be housed.

Prince Abdullah, accompanied by university President Abdul Bari Durra, toured the new building which also includes the library, laboratories and teaching halls.

Dr. Durra delivered an address at the inauguration ceremony which outlined the objectives of this private university, established in 1991 and located along the highway to the Queen Alia International Airport.

The university provides courses that meet the needs of the local job market, according to Dr. Durra.

Prince Abdullah was presented with a token gift on the occasion.

JUST goes ahead with construction of hospital

RAMTHA (J.T.) — The Jordan University of Science and Technology (JUST) is going ahead with preparations for a 650-bed hospital to be built at the premises of the university, near Ramtha, according to a JUST official Wednesday.

JUST has so far despatched 35 doctors abroad for different specialisation training and is employing 20 local and 15 foreign nursing instructors to take up their jobs once the hospital has been formally inaugurated, the official added.

He said the total number of employees at the hospital will eventually reach 3,000.

According to Sa'ad Hijazi, the new president of JUST, work on the hospital began in December of 1993 and when completed, it will have a total area of 110,000 square metres in area to be adjoined by a 9,000 square metre car park.

The hospital, which is expected to cost JD 50 million is being financed by the

state which is covering nearly one third of the cost, as well as through loans from the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development and the Islamic Development Bank which are jointly paying the rest.

The hospital, which could be expanded later to have 800 beds will offer different services to residents of the northern regions of the country, in addition to being a training hospital for JUST medical students.

According to Dr. Hijazi who took over the university's presidency some two months ago, with the completion of the hospital the number of hospital beds in the Irbid region will be increased from nine to 12 for every 10,000 citizens.

The 650-bed hospital, however, has extended its construction period from 44 months to 50 months, the JUST official said.

The hospital is expected to be completed by the middle of 1998.

Amman to host UNCTAD preparatory conference

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Industry and Trade Ali Abul Ragheb announced Wednesday that early next month, Amman will host a conference for 46 Asian nations and world organisations to prepare for the general United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

The UNCTAD conference is scheduled to be held in South Africa between April 29 and May 11 next year.

Speaking after a meeting by the committee preparing

for next month's event, the minister said there will be a meeting of two different levels: The first will be attended by officials on Jan. 6 and 7 at the Royal Cultural Centre in Amman.

The second will be a three-day ministerial meeting to be opened under royal patronage on Jan. 8.

The conference will discuss policies and strategies for development around the world and their impact on Asian nations. It will also assess various development problems facing Third

World nations, the minister said.

Mr. Abul Ragheb said investments and trade issues as well as world financial markets and the problem of indebtedness will also be on the agenda.

According to Mr. Abul Ragheb, questions on sustainable development, poverty problems and aid to Third World nations will be given due attention by delegates.

The delegates will include representatives of 46 organisations.

Jerash Festival 'scandalous,' deputy tells Parliament

By Sa'eda Kilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — An Islamist parliamentarian lashed out at the government Wednesday, accusing it of supporting the Jerash Festival of Culture and Art which, he argued, "encourages scandalous dancing."

Member of the Islamic Action Front Bloc at the Lower House of Parliament Bassam Emoush said the festival, which is held annually in July in the ancient city of Jerash, should be stopped because of its "provocative atmosphere."

"We are not against culture or book exhibitions or traditional handicraft," said Dr. Emoush. "But we are against the scandalous dancing and swaying of youngsters during the disgraceful Jerash nights."

"The constitution states that the religion of this country is Islam, but what happens in Jerash is unacceptable in Islam. It (cannot be) that this festival is not sponsored by officials—financially, and in terms of security," he stated.

In a written reply to an earlier question by the deputy, Minister of Culture Samir

Habashneh said Jerash Festival is sponsored by a private cultural corporation that depends in its financing on its own resources and does not constitute a financial burden on the state's treasury.

But in Wednesday's session, Dr. Emoush expressed surprise at the government's reply and said no corporation could possibly host such a festival without the government's help and support.

"What kind of corporation is capable of attracting such international artistic groups and which bands accept the invitation of this corporation?" Dr. Emoush asked. "Do these singers from Lebanon, Tunisia, Syria and Egypt come to Jordan only to support culture and arts or do they (come to) collect cheques of thousands of dinars for...songs delivered in a provocative atmosphere that does not please God?"

Dr. Emoush called on the government to either "refine" the festival or to put a halt to it, a demand which was not met with a reply from the government in Wednesday's session.

Seminar fails to find concrete solutions to problems in higher education policies

By Alia Toukan
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — A seminar examining higher education in Jordan failed to reach concrete conclusions regarding problems facing universities, although most participants agreed that funding was a major concern.

The two-day seminar, which ended Sunday, discussed issues such as the current admissions quota system and policies in various Jordanian universities, higher education and the Jordanian labour market, the role of private universities in the Kingdom, as well as legislation concerning higher education.

In outlining the policies of admission to Jordanian universities, Minister of Higher Education Rateb Saoud, defended the quota system and the allocation of seats for under-privileged students.

According to Dr. Saoud, the "current educational disparities...are producing two kinds of students—those who are more apt to obtain a sound education,

and those who are less privileged."

Based on this fact, he stated, the applications of those who are considered to be under-privileged cannot be compared on an equal footing with those who have had a better quality of basic education.

One of Dr. Saoud's proposals was the eradication of present disparities in education facilities offered in rural and urban areas.

Teachers in rural areas should be given more monetary incentives, he said. He did not mention where these additional funds would come from.

Responding to Dr. Saoud's comments, Islamist member of parliament Bassam Emoush questioned the criteria used by the ministry to judge who is and is not under-privileged. Dr. Emoush also argued that the admission quota was too large.

Currently 27% of the number of students enrolled at state universities in 1995 were admitted under the quota system.

Eid Dahiyat, a former minister of higher educa-

tion, accused private universities of becoming commercialised and of being run on the principle of profit.

Dr. Dahiyat suggested that these universities be operated more like private universities in the West, especially the United States, which "are run on private funds that come from donations and grants."

President of the University of Applied Sciences Bashir Khadra, proposed that "the Council for Higher Education, as well as the Ministry of Higher Education must only have organisational and supervisory roles, and not a direct administrative role, in relation to public and private universities, and community colleges."

Under the current legislation, the Council for Higher Education and the Ministry of Higher Education are responsible for the administration of public and private universities, as well as community colleges. They set admission standards, curricula, fees, and provide licenses. The Ministry of Higher Education also acts

as an executive body.

Professor Khadra also called for the bridging of the gap between community colleges and universities, and that certain students, having proved their academic merits in colleges, be admitted into universities.

Graduates from community colleges have for the past ten years campaigned to get admissions into state universities, but to no avail.

Minister of Administrative Development, Mohamed Toq, said practical and applied science courses at universities were not up to acceptable standards, and attributed this to a lack of resources and facilities.

He said graduates from Jordanian universities lack scientific thinking and analytical skills, a knowledge of foreign languages, and computer skills.

He added that these three deficiencies "reflect negatively on the capability and efficiency of the labour market."

Although most called on an increase in funds available to universities, none suggested where these funds should come from.



EXAM FEVER: Concentration takes its toll as a student labours over her Tawjihi examination questions. The first part of the Tawjihi exams began yesterday. An estimate of 96,888 students are sitting for the exams all over the Kingdom (See related story above—Photo by Yousef Al 'Allan)

Jordan, South Korea sign cultural, scientific accord

AMMAN (Petra) — Jordan and South Korea Wednesday signed an agreement for the implementation of a cultural and scientific executive programme for 1996 and 1997.

The document, signed by Minister of Planning Secretary General Nabil Ammari and South Korean Amba-

sador to Jordan Jung-II Oh, provides for mutual cooperation in education, higher education, publications, exchange of postgraduate education, scholarships and visits by researchers and scholars from universities in either country.

The document calls on both sides to encourage

participation in tourism festivals. The two sides will also exchange sports visits by officials to study sports installations and to discuss coordination in youth and sports issues.

Jordan and South Korea will, under the agreement, cooperate in information and media affairs to facili-

tate the exchange of television programmes and press material by national news agencies.

Both countries will also exchange cultural publications and information related to children's culture as well as in child welfare issues.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Umra pilgrims told to immunise

AMMAN (Petra) — The Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs announced Wednesday that as of the beginning of 1996 Saudi authorities will no longer allow people to perform the Umra pilgrimage to Mecca unless they hold a certificate of immunisation against meningitis. The authorities have said the certificate is necessary to prevent the spread of this disease among pilgrims. At the same time Minister of Interior Saleh Hamad said Wednesday he has authorised governors in various regions to issue temporary permits for vehicles transporting pilgrims to Mecca. The permits used to be issued by the traffic department.

Mail box owners to pay fees

AMMAN (Petra) — The Ministry of Post and Communications Wednesday called on members of the public who own mail boxes at post offices in Jordan to pay the JD7.5 fee during January. The ministry said subscribers have two extra months within which to pay for the privilege of ownership, but added that a 50 per cent doubling on the original fee, as a fine, will be imposed. There will be a three-month deadline for payment, after which ownership

of the mail boxes will be cancelled.

Limited licence test exemption issued

AMMAN (Petra) — The Department for Licensing Drivers and Vehicles in Marka announced Wednesday that as of January 1, small vehicles made in 1994, 1995 and 1996 and owned by diplomatic missions, will be exempted from the technical test upon renewal of the vehicle's licence. It also said that other cars with licence plates ending in even numbers and manufactured between 1987 and 1993 can have their licence renewed without undergoing technical tests.

88 accidents dealt with in one day

AMMAN (Petra) — The Civil Defence Department (CDD) said Wednesday it dealt with 88 accidents in 24 hours, and in which 33 persons were injured. One of the incidents involved a person who was rushed to Bashir hospital suffering from suffocation after a kerosene heater was left alight in his bedroom. In another incident, which occurred in the Jordan Valley, a man was injured when an old mine exploded near him.

WHAT'S GOING ON

MUSIC RECITAL

* Recital of Eastern music at the Phoenix Gallery for Culture and Art, Gardens Street at 6.00 p.m.

CHRISTMAS SALE

* Gifts and crafts by Suha Lallas Kasssieh at the Jordan Design and Trade Centre of the Noor Al Hussein Foundation, off Wadi Saqra Street (until Dec. 31).

EXHIBITIONS

* Works by artist Hind Nasser at Darat Al Funun (until Jan. 6).

* Photography by poet Ibrahim Nasrallah entitled "The Autobiography of an Eye" at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Weibdeh. (Until Jan. 4). * Photography exhibition "Biblical Itineraries" at the French Cultural Centre. (Until Dec. 30).

Japan's man-behind-scenes becomes opposition chief

TOKYO (R) — Ichiro Ozawa, a politician known for his strong-arm tactics and powerbroking, was elected leader of Japan's main opposition party Wednesday, a position which makes him challenger for the premiership.

His sole opponent and long-time colleague Tsutomu Hata conceded defeat after early returns showed Ozawa was set for a landslide victory in the race for head of the Shinshinto (New Frontier Party), a broad-based party formed last year.

"We have no regrets in fighting the election," Mr. Hata told reporters as he admitted defeat. "We should make sure that the results do not trigger a bitter internal struggle."

Mr. Ozawa's campaign office issued a statement claiming victory in the race. "Ozawa's election platform was understood and appreciated by many citizens," said Toshihiro Nikai, head of Mr. Ozawa's campaign office.

Announcing the first round of partial returns, the party's election commission said Mr. Ozawa garnered 205,500 votes against Mr. Hata's 84,500. The commission was expected to announce complete results later Wednesday.

The race between Mr. Ozawa, 53, who masterminded the merger of nine smaller parties into the Shinshinto last year, and Mr. Hata, 60, prime minister



Ichiro Ozawa

for two months in 1994, has been closely watched for its impact on politics next year.

Mr. Ozawa has vowed to unseat the coalition headed by Socialist Prime Minister Tomiichi Murayama and dominated by the conservative Liberal Democratic Party (LDP). He could well become Japan's prime minister if Shinshinto wins the next general elections.

Mr. Murayama need not call snap polls until mid-1997, but many members of parliament, both in the opposition and ruling camps, have said Mr. Murayama would most like-

ly call general elections around June next year.

The ruling coalition currently holds 294 seats in the 511-member Lower House of Parliament, against Shinshinto's 170.

Mr. Ozawa, along with his opponent Hata, defected from the LDP in 1993 over political reform.

He has espoused faster and deeper reforms than the ruling coalition, which represents conservative farmers, small retailers and public-sector unions.

Mr. Ozawa has called for Japan to play a more leading role in global and

regional affairs, a position shared by many in the LDP, but rejected by the pacifist Socialists.

Mr. Ozawa was instrumental in placing or removing four prime ministers before Mr. Murayama, first as leader of the dominant faction of the LDP and then as a powerbroker in the anti-LDP camp.

In the premiership race in June 1994, Mr. Ozawa again gambled on one of his ex-proteges, former Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu, but lost the crucial parliamentary vote to Mr. Murayama, who was backed by the LDP.

Mr. Ozawa's style had been to manipulate politics from behind the scenes, and this had become increasingly unpopular inside the Shinshinto. But it remains to be seen how Mr. Ozawa's emergence from the back room could affect the fortunes of his party.

In the party polls which began on Dec. 16, an estimated 1.68 million votes were cast — 220,000 by party members plus some 1.46 million by other adult citizens who paid 1,000 Yen (\$10) each to vote, party officials said.

Shinshinto is expected to formally announce the winner late Wednesday, with Mr. Ozawa officially taking over Thursday from outgoing leader Kaifu, who did not stand in the election.



Lee Jun, 73-year-old owner of the luxury Sampoong Department Store, walks out of Seoul District Criminal Court after being sentenced to ten-and-a-half years in jail (AFP photo)

Seoul store owner gets 10 and-a-half years in prison

SEOUL (AFP) — The owner of a shoddily-built luxury department store which collapsed last June here, killing more than 500 people, was jailed for 10 and-a-half years Wednesday, court officials said.

Lee Jun, 73, owner of the Sampoong Department Store, was convicted of manslaughter through negligence and embezzlement at a trial in the Seoul criminal court.

His son and president of the store, Lee Han-Sang, was sentenced to seven years in prison on the same charges.

The collapse, which was billed here as the worst peacetime disaster in South Korea, brought a total of 25 people to justice.

The collapse was a tragedy spawned by corruption and substandard construction work which is prevalent in our society," a three-judge panel said in its ruling.

"In order to help eradicate the widespread practice of substandard construction work, the court hands out heavy sentences for the accused," it added.

But a group of white-mourning clad relatives of the victims who crowded into the courtroom screamed for the death sentence.

"Death to Lee Jun... Bring my son back to life," one of the mourners cried.

The court said Lee had violated construction regulations to secure more floor space in order to realise more profits and had bribed government officials in return for condoning flouting rules.

Two former heads of the Socho district office — Lee Choong-Woo and Hwang Chul-Min — were also

handed prison terms and fined for accepting bribes from Sampoong in return for allowing illegal modifications to the building.

The first official, whose office is in the area where Sampoong was located, received a three-year jail sentence with a \$16,880 fine, and the second two and-a-half years in prison with a \$15,580 fine.

A third district official was sentenced to two and-a-half years in prison.

Two Sampoong officials, two construction designers and a construction company official were handed jail sentences ranging from one and half years to three years in prison, also for manslaughter through negligence.

Fifteen others received suspended jail sentences and fines.

The multi-storey store collapsed under its own weight within minutes on June 29, burying hundreds of shoppers and salespersons under tonnes of debris. More than 1,000 were injured.

The collapse sent shock waves throughout the country and prompted President Kim Young-Sam to order safety checks of apartment blocks and public buildings nationwide and step up surveillance of construction work.

The rescue work dragged on for more than a month hampered by underground fires, spawning a series of dramas, including the miraculous survival of a teenager rescued from under the debris 17 days after the collapse.

The shop owner had his assets worth some \$394 million frozen by government authorities for compensation for the victims.

China gives up with Patten over Hong Kong handover — banker

HONG KONG (AFP) — Beijing has totally given up on Governor Chris Patten over issues relating to Hong Kong's transition to Chinese rule in 1997, according to a former top banker in the territory.

Sir Michael Sandberg, chairman of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corp. from 1977-86, sharply criticised the governor for the way he has handled his mandate in Hong Kong.

In an interview published in the Eastern Express newspaper Wednesday, he accused Mr. Patten of trying to govern "by himself" with a direct line to British Prime Minister John Major.

He said the bridge that had been built up with China following the 1984 declaration on the sovereignty changeover had been "blown up" by Mr. Patten.

The governor has angered Beijing by unilaterally

going ahead with electoral reforms in the territory in the run-up to 1997.

"It is obvious that they (Chinese) are irritated. It shouldn't be so," said Mr. Sandberg. "We would all like to see absolute freedoms. But you can't superimpose your institutions on other countries. Human rights (are) something we all want," he said.

Mr. Sandberg, 68, described Mr. Patten as "a man running out of time" and "a politician who has been well and truly stumped by the opposing team."

"I consider Chris Patten to be very sincere but he is trying to govern by himself. He must take advice," said Mr. Sandberg.

"He operates on a direct phone line to the prime minister. Previous governors have always had a chain of communications," he said.

China defends human rights record after dissident jailing

BEIJING (AFP) — Two weeks after handing its most famous dissident a 14-year jail term, China mounted a defence of its human rights record Wednesday while accusing the West of double standards and interference in domestic affairs.

A 23,000-character government white paper lauded the overall improvement of human rights in China over the past four years, which it said was reflected in current levels of "national unity, domestic harmony and a continually rising standard of living."

Significantly, the document also affirmed the rights of Chinese citizens to hold opposing political views to the government so long as they do not resort to criminal activities.

The publication of the white paper, entitled "the progress of human rights in China," comes just two weeks after a Beijing court sentenced the country's best-known dissident, Wei Jingsheng, to 14 years for sedition. The sentence, which Mr. Wei has appealed, was strongly condemned by the West.

Observers here said the document laid out China's likely line of defence against a resolution criticising Beijing's human rights record that is expected to be tabled at the U.N. Human Rights Commission in March.

The white paper reiterated China's stance that a history of foreign invasion, exploitation and oppression had left China with a unique human rights agenda, in which national development and the right of people to food and clothing took top priority.

"China's principled stand on human rights has won support from many countries in the world," it said, adding that the government had always stood for "maintaining world peace and promoting the healthy development of international human rights."

A U.S. State Department global survey of human rights published earlier this year said China had made no progress in human rights and highlighted arbitrary arrests, detentions without trial and torture of prisoners.

Wednesday's white paper indirectly refuted Washington's charges, saying China abided by the principles on human rights set out in the U.N. Charter, and accused developed nations of double standards over human rights and using the issue as a pretext to interfere in China's internal affairs.

"Hegemony, power politics and an unfair economic order still exist, imperilling world peace and development and hindering the realisation of human rights and basic freedoms," it said.

"This is a classic example of China's faith in the idea that attack is the best form of defence," a Western diplomat said.

"It brushes over the outcry over Wei Jingsheng and sends a clear message to the commission in Geneva that it will not be cowed by international criticism," he added.

The white paper strongly rejected documented reports by human rights organisations of state-sanctioned abuses in the country's criminal justice system.

"China opposes the practice of forcing confessions and giving credence to them and strictly prohibits the use of cruel punishment in every link of the judicial work."

Some 398 cases of judicial abuse were investigated in 1994, the document said, adding that "police and other people involved" were punished, with some even receiving the death sentence.

Norwegian crown prince to study in U.S.

OSLO (AFP) — Norway's Crown Prince Haakon, 22, has broken with tradition by deciding to pursue his university studies in the United States next year rather than England, the royal palace said Wednesday. The heir to the Norwegian throne will study political science, but he has not yet decided which university he would like to attend. Both his father, King Harald V, and grandfather, the late King Olav, graduated from Balliol College, Oxford, in 1960 and 1926 respectively. Prince Haakon has completed two years at the Norwegian Naval Academy and holds the grade of lieutenant. He is currently serving one year aboard the torpedo boat KNM Oem off the Norwegian coast.

Deal that should have been

MARSEILLE, France (AFP) — The lawyer who bought Jeanne Calment's apartment on an annuity arrangement 30 years ago though he was on to a good thing: At age 90 she was unlikely to live much longer, so he would be able to take over the property. But Tuesday, as Miss Calment remained hale and relatively hearty at age 120, relatives of Andre Francois Raffray were preparing to bury him; he died on Christmas day (Monday), aged a mere 77. Friends of Raffray, a local notary (solicitor) in the southern town of Arles, had in the past joked about his unfortunate arrangement with Jeanne Calment, which he had always refused to discuss with the press. Under the life annuity scheme, a popular arrangement in France, he was to pay her 2,500 francs (around \$500) a month for however long she lived, after which he would become the owner of her first-floor apartment. Ms. Calment, who earlier this year became the oldest living person known anywhere in the world, and who remembers meeting painter Vincent van Gogh as a girl, had herself joked about it. "In life, people sometimes make rotten deals," she said.

Janet Jackson to close deal with Virgin

NEW YORK (AFP) — Pop singer Janet Jackson is close to a deal with Virgin Records that would pay her between \$50 million and \$90 million, the Wall Street Journal reports this week. "The negotiations aren't complete, but they are close to reaching a pact," according to a senior executive familiar with the deal quoted by the journal. The daily newspaper also said Jackson, who has been looking for a new contract for the last few months, was trying to gain ownership of her original record masters and a cut in the profits on each album. Virgin is a division of London-based Thorn EMI Plc.

Book released on Nixon-Presley meeting

WASHINGTON (AFP) — A bizarre 1970 White House encounter between President Richard Nixon and singing legend Elvis Presley has become the subject of a book — and it's 61 pages long. The aptly-titled "The day Elvis met Nixon," was written by the presidential aide who set up the encounter. Egil "Bud" Krogh, and its release was timed to coincide with the 25th anniversary of the Dec. 21, 1970 encounter. "Well, the word 'strange' comes to mind, definitely," Krogh said of the meeting, set up so Presley could discuss the nation's war on drugs.

Aum guru's wife pleads innocence to murder charges

TOKYO (AFP) — The wife of Shoko Asahara, the Aum Supreme Truth guru charged with masterminding the Tokyo subway gas attack, said Wednesday she had not conspired in the 1994 murder of a sect member, although she was present during the lynching.

Tomoko Matsumoto, 37, told the Tokyo District Court that she had witnessed the lynch-murder of a renegade from the Doomsday Cult, but added: "I did not conspire with anyone in the slaying."

"It is true that I happened to be on the scene and I am overwhelmed with shame for the fact," said Matsumoto, charged with her assistant role in the murder. "It is true that there was the death."

Asahara, 40, has been alleged by some of his former disciples to have ordered the murder of Kotaro Ochiai in January 1994 for trying to help an

elderly female Aum member escape the cult's main colony at the foot of Mount Fuji.

Hideaki Yasuda, the son of the woman, has admitted in court that Asahara, whose real name is Michio Matsumoto, forced him to join other people in strangling Ochiai as capital punishment for the escape attempt.

Asahara's wife was arrested in July and said in a written confession that she tried to talk the guru out of the execution but that "I cannot be exempted from moral responsibility."

The guru and his wife have six children, the oldest of them aged 17.

The wife had served as acting head of the cult after Asahara was arrested in May on charges of masterminding the March 20 subway massacre, which left 11 dead and some 5,500 injured. He is also facing charges

connected to another nerve-gas attack in the old castle town of Matsumoto in 1994, and to a series of murders and kidnappings.

Meanwhile, Masato Yokoyama, one of several people charged with releasing the Nazi-invented sarin gas on trains in the Tokyo subway, said in a separate hearing at the Tokyo District Court that he had committed the crime under an order from Aum's top scientist Hideo Mouri.

Mouri was stabbed to death by a hitman allegedly hired by an underworld racket in April, a move widely seen as part of Asahara's campaign to silence him and blame all of Aum's crimes on the dead man.

The assassin, Hiroyuki Jo, was sentenced to 12 years in jail for the murder but no clear evidence was produced to link him with the cult.

Police divers called in to hunt for bodies in S. African flood

PIETERMARITZBURG, South Africa (AFP) — Police divers countrywide have been called in to assist in recovering bodies from a flooded river here after it raged through a shantytown on Christmas day, police said Wednesday.

Police spokesman Superintendent Henry Budhrum said local police divers had been working non-stop since a cloudburst caused the Umsindusi River to burst its banks late Monday and flood through Edendale, a heavily-populated black township 10 kilometres from here.

"The men are exhausted," Mr. Budhrum said. "We've now called in every available diver from around the country to assist them."

At least 131 bodies have already been recovered, according to Civil Protection Unit officials, although Mr. Budhrum Wednesday morning put the official death toll at 123.

Pietermaritzburg, the Kwazulu-Natal provincial capital, was Tuesday declared a disaster area by provincial authorities.

Deputy President Thabo Mbeki was Wednesday to visit the area to determine what assistance was needed from central government, his spokesman, Ricky Naidoo, said.

The death toll from the flood is the worst recorded in South Africa's history, eclipsing the 104 people killed when a flash flood swept through the central Cape Province town of Laingsburg in 1981.

Rescuers said more than 1,000 people were left homeless by the Umsindusi flash flood while witnesses reported entire families and their shanties carried away by the torrent.

Mr. Budhrum said Wednesday more bodies were expected to be recovered as the level of the river began to drop.

Witnesses said the receding waters had left a trail of debris in streets and across fields.

132 killed in bloodshed in S. Africa's Zulu heartland

DURBAN (R) — At least 132 people have been killed in political and criminal violence in South Africa's Zulu heartland province since last Friday, police said Wednesday.

The toll compared to 90 victims of violence in Kwazulu-Natal province over the same period a week ago, police spokesman Superintendent Bala Naidoo told Reuters.

In one of the worst incidents, police said more than 600 Zulus armed with spears, axes and guns swept through rural villages of Shobashobane in Izingolweni, on the Kwazulu-Natal south coast, burning, killing and looting in a suspected politically-motivated attack on Christmas day.

Survivors told reporters that as they fled from an "Impi", or Zulu column, advancing towards their village they ran straight into another marching towards them from the opposite direction in a traditional Zulu battle tactic.

At least 16 people were killed in the attack on homes of families of African National Congress supporters, police said.

Deputy President Thabo Mbeki Tuesday visited the scene of the massacre in Shobashobane outside Port Shepstone, 160 kilometres south of Durban.

The ANC's Kwazulu-Natal provincial spokesman Dumisani Makheye Tuesday blamed the Zulu-based Inkatha Freedom Party for the massacre.

But Inkatha spokesman Phillip Powell denied the allegations, saying Inkatha members had been "subjected to a wave of killing in the past three months."

A police spokesman told Reuters that

Shobashobane was quiet Wednesday, adding he expected the toll to rise as more bodies were found in burnt-out houses.

"Shobashobane is a ghost town. That means it is quiet since the attack. I can say that nobody has been arrested. There are units of the South African National Defence Force and the internal stability unit patrolling the area," said Sergeant Andries van Aarde.

Meanwhile a human rights watchdog group, the Network Of Independent Monitors (NIM), Wednesday called on Safety and Security Minister Sydney Mufamadi to allow independent investigators to probe the south coast killings.

"What is required is a team of independent investigators to be mandated to investigate violence in this area, and in particular the recent massacres," the group said in a statement.

The attack was launched in defiance of a security force crackdown and a renewed peace initiative this month by President Nelson Mandela and his main political foe, Inkatha leader Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi.

Inkatha won power in Kwazulu-Natal while the ANC dominates the central government after South Africa's first all-race elections last year.

More than 13,000 people were killed in Kwazulu-Natal in political violence between supporters of the ANC and Inkatha in the decade leading up to the April 1994 elections.



Police arrest a striking taxi driver in downtown Montijhee district as several thousand drivers backed by owners went on a rampage in the Bangladeshi capital (AFP photo)

Bangladesh opposition boycott opens poll floodgate

DHAKA (R) — The boycott by the main opposition of February's elections has opened the floodgates for a host of individuals trying to cash in on Bangladesh's political crisis.

Election commission officials said Wednesday the political aspirants, mostly from parties and groups never heard of before, asked about financial and other facilities they could expect. Many wanted exemption from security deposits. Others wanted cash from the government or election expenses from the commission, said one official who declined to be identified.

"We can hardly convince them that anyone contesting the polls must abide by all the rules set by the commission. And they don't include

any material gains in whatever form," he told Reuters. General elections are due to be held on February 7 after President Abdur Rahman Biswas dissolved parliament last month.

But major opposition parties, led by the Awami League of Sheikh Hasina, said they would boycott the polls unless Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia resigns and allows a neutral caretaker administration to supervise the voting.

Mrs. Khaleda, elected in 1991 in what were billed as Bangladesh's first free polls, has rejected the demands as unconstitutional. She also denies charges that her government rigged a 1994 parliamentary by-election and engaged in sweeping corruption.

Backstage meetings between the opposition and the ruling Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) over the past two weeks, arranged by U.S. Ambassador David Merrill, have failed to bring any agreement.

"We have reiterated our position very clearly to the BNP leaders that we will accept nothing short of a neutrally-supervised election," said an Awami leader, Amir Hossain Amu, Wednesday.

Opposition legislators resigned from parliament in December 1994 following a 10-month boycott, leaving the country in apparently unending political turmoil. Restive opposition groups have organised a series of strikes and blockades, but

have so far failed to move the prime minister.

"The rush of unexpected, would-be candidates grows every day as prospects of an opposition boycott gain ground," one commission official said.

"Many party leaders don't have a party letterhead and some asked if such things could be supplied by the commission."

One political analyst said the main motive was a hope of making money in return for taking part in the polls.

Banglabazar Patrika newspaper said Wednesday the BNP was tacitly encouraging the "virtually non-existent and newly floated parties" to enter the fray so that it could avoid being blamed for holding an unilateral poll.

Chun drinks 'kimchi' water, hints at stopping hunger strike

SEOUL (AFP) — Jailed former South Korean President Chun Doo-hwan Wednesday hinted that he might stop a 25-day-long hunger strike and started drinking salty fermented cabbage (kimchi) water, government officials said.

Mr. Chun, who has eased his fast by taking water enriched with sugar, salt and vitamins, started drinking kimchi water and taking medicines to line his stomach, the justice ministry officials said.

An unidentified official of the Police Hospital, to which Mr. Chun was moved from Anyang Prison eight days ago, said Mr. Chun had "virtually" stopped starving himself after suffering insomnia, a slow pulse and dizziness.

Mr. Chun has been refusing solid food or intravenous feeding since he was

arrested on Dec. 3 on mutiny charges related to a 1979 military coup, which led to the massacre of more than 200 pro-democracy protesters in Kwangju.

A doctor at the hospital said earlier Wednesday that Mr. Chun, a former general, had persistently demanded water in which rice is washed.

The milky water, which contains limited amount of starch and vitamins, is often used here to help patients recover from a long fast.

"Mr. Chun shows signs of increasing nervousness and has difficulties in speech," Lee Kwon-jun of Seoul's Police Hospital told journalists.

In a related development, prosecutors Wednesday launched an on-the-spot inspection in the southwestern city of Kwangju as part of ongoing investigation of

the Kwangju massacre.

A group of relatives of the victims mobbed four prosecutors, protesting that the inspection was not thorough enough, witnesses said.

The bloodshed occurred after Mr. Chun and his 1979 coup colleagues rose to power by extending martial law throughout the country. Mr. Chun was president in 1980 to 1988.

He also faces corruption charges after more than \$300 million of his personal money had been traced in bank accounts and real estate holdings.

Mr. Chun was indicted last week, together with his successor and coup colleague Roh Tae-woo, who is already on trial for taking bribes from business leaders while in office from 1988 to 1993.

Kohl named European of the Year

PARIS (AFP) — German Chancellor Helmut Kohl was named European of the Year for his work in the European Union, the French Roman Catholic weekly La Vie which created the award announced Wednesday.

Jacques Delors, the former president of the European Commission who headed the international jury awarding the prize, praised Mr. Kohl for his "exceptional personality."

He also stressed Mr. Kohl's commitment "to all the major strategic choices that allowed the European Union to move forward."

Bhutto rejects opposition demand for mid-term polls

ISLAMABAD (AFP) — Pakistani Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto has turned down opposition leader Nawaz Sharif's demand for mid-term polls as a pre-condition for talks on ending their political standoff.

Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League (PML) opposition party claims the 26-month-old Bhutto government has failed to govern and blames it for continuing violence in the country's largest city of Karachi, high inflation, corruption and widespread insecurity.

Ms. Bhutto and her political allies and chief ministers of the country's four provinces "outrightly rejected" Tuesday a letter from Mr. Sharif in which the opposition demanded early elections, officials said.

Mr. Sharif, a former prime minister who now leads the main opposition party, wrote to the prime minister last week in response to her letter proposing a reconciliation dialogue.

A statement issued after Tuesday's meeting said the opposition leader was "out of touch" with reality.

It expressed the government's readiness for talks with the opposition on constitutional issues common to manifestos of the two sides.

"The art of politics is cooperation in common areas and in that sense the government would always be ready to cooperate," the statement added.

The statement said the situation now was "entirely different" from the "irretrievable breakdown" of Pakistan's constitutional machinery in 1993 when Mr. Sharif was prime minister.

"The economic crisis left behind (by Sharif) is being tackled and Pakistan is no longer internationally isolated," the statement claimed, adding that the federation and provinces were functioning in harmony.

Ms. Bhutto earlier this month offered talks on scrapping a constitutional provision, under which the country's president has discretionary powers to dissolve the National Assembly, as well as on reserving seats for women in the parliament.

Mr. Sharif has urged President Farooq Ahmed Leghari to appoint a new chief minister in troubled Sindh province, of which Karachi is the capital, with the consensus of opposition, government and Mohajir Qaumi Movement (MQM).

Political violence in Karachi, which has claimed more than 1,800 lives this year, is widely seen as linked to confrontation between the government and MQM, which represents the large Urdu-speaking immigrant community in Sindh, where the native majority speaks Sindhi.

Meanwhile, already sour relations between Islamabad and Kabul have been brought under further strain after Pakistani police named an Afghan as prime suspect over a killer car bomb attack last week.

Syed Masood Shah, police chief in North West Frontier Province (NWFP), named the man as Abdul Mateen, a Farsi-speaker, at a news conference in the provincial capital Peshawar late Tuesday.

He also implicitly blamed Kabul, saying Afghan President Burhanuddin

Rabbani, his top military commander Ahmed Shah Masood and most of their supporters were Farsi-speaking Tajiks.

The Dec. 21 blast in Peshawar's central market left 45 people dead and 100 injured, according to Pakistan's official media. Unofficial figures put the toll at 60 killed and 200 injured.

Mr. Shah said Mr. Mateen, who appears as a bearded young man in a picture released by the police chief, had bought a brown 1974 Toyota Corolla car used in the bombing from a local second hand car dealership.

Mr. Mateen bought the car with another Farsi-speaking Afghan, Mr. Shah said, adding that he was hopeful the two suspects would be tracked down soon.

But the police chief said the bombing was not an individual act by these two, pointing out that bands of Afghan "saboteurs" had been involved in a spate of previous smaller explosions in the northwest in recent weeks.

Six days after the blast, the Pakistan government expelled the Afghan consul general in Peshawar, Musa Khan, accusing him of being involved in activities "incompatible" with his status. The charges were not specified, but Pakistani intelligence sources in the gateway city to Afghanistan said the diplomat was suspected of masterminding acts of sabotage in the province, home to more than a million Afghan refugees.

Kabul has refuted allegations of involvement in the blast and regretted the expulsion of its consul general.

Pro-government Pakistani politician Nawabzada Nasrullah Khan has proposed retaliatory action against the Afghan government following the blast.

But opposition leader Nawaz Sharif Tuesday blamed the deterioration of relations with the Kabul on sloppy policy by Islamabad.

Islamabad's relations with the Rabbani administration sharply deteriorated when a mob burned down the Pakistani embassy in Kabul on Sept. 6, over the country's alleged support for Afghanistan's Taliban Islamic Militia, fighting to topple the Rabbani regime.

In retaliation, Pakistan expelled some 30 Afghan diplomats and officials from Afghanistan's embassy in Islamabad in September and October, amid a war of words with Kabul that continues.

Pakistan denies the Taliban Militia, who have besieged the Afghan capital and want to install Islamic Sharia Law, are materially backed by Islamabad.

Islamabad believes that Mr. Rabbani, whose two-year term expired in December 1994, has lost legitimacy. Neighbouring Iran recognises his government and is known to be suspicious of the Taliban.

Officials in Peshawar say the Pakistan government has tightened up measures to restrict free movement of Afghans, mostly living in camps in the northwestern region.

The NWFP police chief said the authorities were devising a system under which Afghans would have to obtain permits to enter cities for work or trading.

Taiwan denies reviving missile project to target China

TAIPEI (AFP) — Defence Minister Chiang Chung-Lin Wednesday denied news reports that Taiwan's military was reviving a long-shelved project to develop medium-range missiles capable of targeting China.

He also said the nationalist island had no plans to develop nuclear weapons, despite an increase in the perceived military threat from China.

"We have no plans to revive the Sky Horse project or to change the short-range Sky Bow II into a medium-range missile," Mr. Chiang told reporters after a meeting of the ruling Kuomintang. "Nor would we develop nuclear weapons," he said.

Mr. Chiang did not deny, however, that Taiwan has the ability to develop medium-range missiles.

The nationalist island

mooted developing a 1,000-kilometre surface-to-surface missile, the Sky Horse, in 1981. But it suspended the project the following year to avoid fuelling tension with the mainland.

The China Times daily, quoting an unidentified defence ministry source, reported that the defense authorities had decided to revive plans to build a medium-range missile.

But instead of developing the Sky Horse, it would transform a short-range surface-to-air missile, the Sky Bow II, into a surface-to-surface missile with a range of 600 kilometres, the paper said.

That would enable the Taiwanese navy to strike any major coastal city in China as well as China's Nanjing and Guangzhou military zones, it said.

The daily said the deci-

sion to revive development of medium-range missiles came after China conducted two rounds of missile tests near Taiwan to warn the island from officially splitting with the mainland.

The paper said that if the military wants the altered missile to be more destructive, it should also develop a nuclear warhead, since a traditional warhead would not be powerful enough.

Meanwhile, Taiwanese opposition members demanded the government clarify press reports that a ballistic missile from China had passed through Taiwan airspace despite denial of the incident by the military here.

"The incident indicates that there is a serious defect in our air defense and monitoring systems, and the military authorities cannot just cover this up," Sisy

Chen, spokeswoman of the pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party, said.

She was referring to recent reports that a Chinese ballistic missile passed through Taiwan's airspace on Dec. 21.

"There is a need for the military to clarify this," she said, adding the defense minister must step down if the report was correct.

Independent presidential candidate Chen Li-An joined in calls for government clarification of the incident. Mr. Chen is running against incumbent President Lee Teng-hui for the March 23 presidential polls.

The defense ministry, however, denied the reports, saying it was "impossible" for it to miss any incoming missile.

Support wanes for queen in Australia

CANBERRA (R) — More than one in two Australians want an Australian head of state, while only one in three want the British monarch, Queen Elizabeth, to remain as Australia's queen, according to a poll published Wednesday.

Ruling Labour Party officials said the poll in the Australian newspaper showed strong public support for Prime Minister Paul Keating's push for a republic, set to be a key issue in a national election which has

to be held by May.

The poll found 56 per cent of respondents wanted an Australian head of state, against 36 per cent who wanted the monarchy to remain.

Mr. Keating is campaigning strongly for Australia to become a republic by 2001, the centenary of federation, to replace the present system under which a governor-general acts as the queen's representative in Australia.

"This (poll) shows how

strong the feelings are out there on the republic," one Labour official said.

The conservative opposition coalition of liberal and national parties does not officially endorse or oppose the push for a republic. It has pledged to hold a people's convention on the constitution if it wins the election, expected in March.

The opposition holds a commanding lead over Mr. Keating's government in opinion polls, about seven percentage points.

India suspects Pakistan in arms air-drop

NEW DELHI (AFP) — Pakistan's military intelligence is suspected of organising last week's mysterious air-drop of weapons over eastern India. A senior minister was quoted as saying Wednesday.

Home Minister S.B. Chavan told reporters in the western city of Pune that the "needle of suspicion" pointed towards Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI)

agency, the Press Trust of India news agency reported. Describing the parachuting of the weapons as a "new feature of terrorist tactics," Mr. Chavan described the incident as "a serious development which cannot be taken lightly."

The home minister, the effective number two in the cabinet of Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao, said it was too early to say who the

assault rifles, rocket launchers, pistols and thousands of rounds of ammunition were intended for.

Three parachute-loads of arms were dropped near Puruliya in the eastern state of West Bengal on Dec. 17 from a Hong Kong-registered AN-26 transport plane.

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Empowering local councils

THERE IS a great deal of work that local councils could be doing on top of street cleaning and garbage collection. Local councils should, for example, be responsible for buying electricity and water from the central government and reselling them to subscribers. That would ensure a more efficient system of distribution of the services and a better system for collecting fees. Municipalities should run schools, clinics and other services, including even policing. This is the span of responsibility of municipal councils in more advanced societies, and it is perhaps why those societies are so advanced. People, at the grassroots level, are directly responsible for providing and maintaining the services that they need. And this is the essence of the much advocated decentralisation that we have been hearing of in the last few years.

Only a few years back, municipal councils were providing their own water and electricity. But the central government slowly encroached on these services and laid its hands on them. And because a centralised bureaucracy has always been both clumsy and expensive, water and electricity have become more expensive to produce and distribute.

This everlasting tendency of central governments to control all the means of production and their distribution can and should be abandoned. Slowly but surely the government needs to reverse this process and leave communities to provide for their own viability and success.

It might sound premature to suggest this, but even schools should be run and funded by the local councils. That would put an end to the so-called underprivileged regions where the central government has failed so far to provide proper education for all. Perhaps the state should reallocate the Ministry of Education funds to local councils proportionate to the number of students in each region. Schools that are run by the community itself would very easily be geared towards the community's particular needs.

Local communities are or should be the building blocks of any country. No society can realise its full potential as long as these units are not self-supporting, and weak.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER in Al Ra'i daily criticised a decision by the mayor of the Arab town of Qalqilya in the West Bank, who refused to lay any border barriers separating the town from the Israeli territories under the pretext that such barriers contradict the spirit of peace. Tariq Masarweh said that the mayor's position and statements by heads of villages close the border with Israel that they want to keep the Israeli identity cards in addition to the Palestinian identity constitute an issue of serious dimensions. He said the Palestinians should rather demand some kind of border with Israel if they are really interested in creating their own independent state, which must have borders, especially with Israel, because self-rule is not a solid and lasting formula. The self-rule formula naturally pleases the Americans and the Israelis and those who are advocating a confederation between Jordan, Israel and Palestine, but not those seeking an independent state for the Palestinians, said the writer. He said the economic temptations of peace should not lure the Palestinian economy that can freely deal with all neighbours.

A WRITER in Al Dustour daily described the on-going dialogue between Syria and Israel as very important and paving the ground for speedy steps leading to a peace settlement. Mohammad Kawash said that in the coming negotiations, Israel is expected to move closer to the Syrian position so as to reach agreement over the Golan and South Lebanon, which is essential for a comprehensive peace in the whole region. Encouraged by the fact that the majority of Israelis are now backing the Labour government, especially in the wake of the assassination of the late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, the Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres, is keen on attaining this comprehensive peace which would open the door for Israel to establish normal relations with the rest of the Arab World, said the writer. The Israeli government is careful to achieve peace with Syria before the coming parliamentary elections in order to win the Israeli electorate's backing.

The View from Academia

Jordan's position towards the Palestinian brethren: Healthy, constructive and far-sighted

By Dr. Ahmad Majdoubeh

SOMETHING WARM, loud and clear — warmer, louder and clearer than what we have felt, heard or seen so far — ought to be said for Jordan's healthy stance towards the Palestinian people. Indeed, no one expects Jordan to do more (or less) than it has done and is presently doing.

Since the beginning of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Jordanian position vis-a-vis the Palestinian cause (a position often misunderstood or unfairly dealt with) has been more reasonable, far-sighted and constructive than many have been willing to see or admit.

There is a great deal of truth in the saying, for instance, that it has taken many in the Arab World (and in Israel) more than half a century (of wasted valuable time) to realise what Jordan has realised from the start, that a satisfactory solution to the Palestine problem can be reached only through peaceful means. Jordan has propagated and voiced such sound premise (at times solo and alone) persistently since the beginning of the said conflict, and it has the right now (that peace is beginning to bear fruit) not only to congratulate itself on the depth of its vision and the validity of its views but also to claim some credit in whatever its Arab brethren have achieved (or will) since Madrid 1991. One can argue, in other words, that the return or "liberation" of Nabulus, Bethlehem or any other Palestinian or Arab territories to Palestinian or Arab sovereignty may in all fairness be attributed (ought to be attributed), in part at least, to the very philosophy and position which Jordan has voiced for decades and helped materialise.

But Jordan is to be lauded also for its material and moral support of Palestinians inside and outside the Palestinian territories throughout the long years of occupation and suffering, and for its magnanimous spirit. Take, for example, His Majesty's recent intervention on behalf of the inhabitants of Mukhayam Al Hussein (Al Hussein Refugee Camp). They were in danger of being evicted from their humble homes, the reason being that the land on which the homes were erected belongs to private individuals. Throughout the good offices of the King a satisfactory solution was proposed to allow the inhabitants to stay where they are and to make the owners happy. Take also the decision taken by the Jordanian government a couple of months ago to offer Palestinians from the occupied territories five-year Jordanian passports to facilitate international travel plans for these individuals, many of whom were having a tough time getting foreign visas and arranging travel routes.

Despite the false claim by some radical ultranationalists among us (both Jordanian and Palestinian) and their helpless attempt to convince us that such moves collide with Jordanian and Palestinian sovereignty privileges (a chauvinistic mode of thinking and an unnecessary phobia, no doubt), I believe that these two particular steps are an epitome of an extremely informed and sophisticated Jordanian policy towards the Palestinian people. They are part and parcel in fact of a long-standing Jordanian policy of support, care and profound sense of responsibility and commitment to the Palestinian cause. Jordanian magnanimity, which transcends all kinds of petty, narrow-minded and short-sighted considerations, is not simply an impressive

act of charity and good will but an extremely enlightened, sophisticated and refined political strategy for whose introduction, development and perfection His Majesty deserves a great applause.

What crime or fault has Jordan committed in allowing Palestinian refugees who have been living in these humble homes for decades to continue to live safely and securely until such a time comes when the whole refugee problem is properly addressed and solved? Should they be evicted and thrown into a homeland they have not fully restored and with no time to think or see what they themselves plan to do? What crime or fault has Jordan committed in making life easier for Palestinian travellers many of whom have a hell of a time moving, even inside the great Arab homeland, with Palestinian travel documents or two-year Jordanian passports? No crime and no fault whatsoever. Throughout the trying years of occupation and of homelessness, the Palestinians have been in dire need (and still are) not of speeches, partitioning opinions, sermons and words of wisdom but of constructive specific decisions and measures, such as those mentioned, to alleviate suffering and make life a little more decent and convenient.

Jordan has provided much of that and much can be said for its attempt to preserve the identity of Arab East Jerusalem, for the efforts it exerted and the money it spent on the holy places, for its graceful and faithful compliance with the Arab decision in 1974 to recognise the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) as the "sole legitimate representative of the Palestinians," for its readiness and enthusiasm to provide an umbrella for the negotiating Palestinian delegation at Madrid and after and its respect of the delegation's need to think and act independently, and for its decision to allow the Palestinians in the aftermath of Oslo to represent themselves and to shape their own destiny.

This last decision, which I wish to highlight here, is indeed crucial. I would argue that what the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza need more than anything else at this point in history (even more than economic and financial assistance) is, simply, ample room or space — ample room or space which enables them to negotiate for themselves, to carry out the agreements with Israel to the best of their ability, to sort out their lives and priorities, and (above all) to think and breathe freely with no rush or pressure.

Jordan has given them that. Throughout the past 20 years, but especially since Madrid, His Majesty has spared no occasion to reiterate and affirm, in the clearest of terms, Jordan's commitment to the respect of the Palestinian need of room and space. Take, for instance, the King's statements to journalists during his meeting with them at the Royal Court last Thursday. Said the King, "We will not adopt any stance regarding our relationship or links with our Palestinian brethren and people until they have been able to restore their rights on their own land, to regain their freedom on their territory and soil, to be in a position to have their own say and to choose what they wish." It is only then that proposals about linkage, confederation and other formulas, will be considered, debated and adopted. What

more does one want?

This attitude is healthy. It should be emphasised here, especially to those who may take such an attitude for granted, that it has not been and is not easy for Jordan to express such a view. Let's remember that Jordan and the Palestinian territories were, not long ago, under one national flag and part of one country. At a time when we in the Arab World have witnessed, and still do, Arab countries imposing their will and whim on neighbouring sisterly countries and rushing, coercing or forcing some of them into all types of tenuous and manipulative relationships, alliances and unions, the Jordanian decision to give the Palestinian brethren — a comfortable majority of whom were and are Jordanian citizens — all the time in the world, all the freedom, room and space they need to think and act independently is a highly civilised, highly democratic and highly revolutionary gesture.

There is no doubt in my mind that such a gesture will ultimately yield good results for both Jordanians and Palestinians (and, by example, for other Arab brethren). Two virtues of this gesture need to be underscored here.

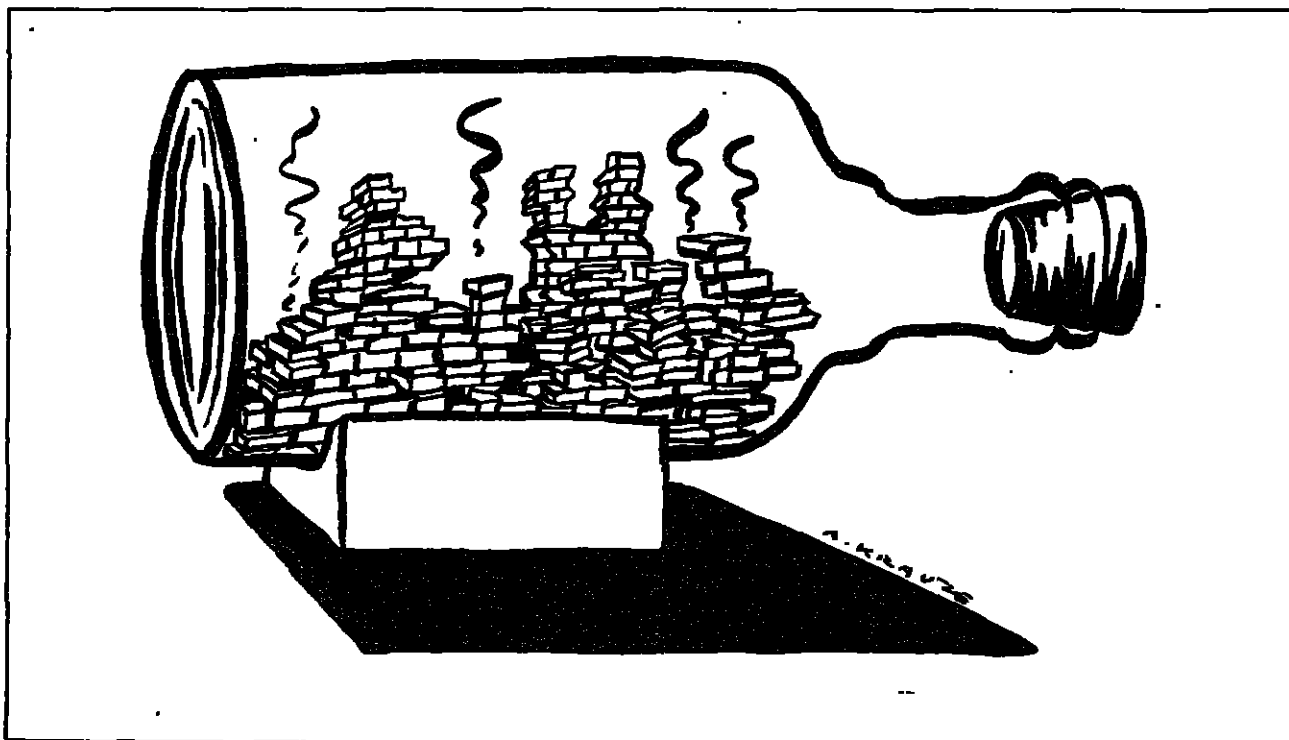
— The ample room and space the Palestinians are given at this point will enable them to think matters through carefully and conveniently, to organise their own home, to establish their democratic institutions, to recuperate, to build their confidence, to stand on their feet, to assert their presence and independence (independence so that no one in the future will claim the West Bank and Gaza, as Israel once did, under the pretext that they have never been independent) and then to embark on a fruitful relationship with Jordan. Without meaning to bias or prejudice the outcome of the Palestinian-Jordanian decision regarding the form of future linkage, I believe that it has become obvious over the years, and more so recently, that a comfortable majority (if not a vast majority) of Jordanians and Palestinians is for a firm link (confederation, federation, union, unity, etc.). The two peoples are inseparable.

However, even though the relationship (past and present) between Jordanians and Palestinians has worked effectively for the most part, Jordanians and Palestinians today feel like a modern couple who have rushed themselves into a marriage at a young age and who (after they have matured) need some time now, and some room and space, to think things over a bit and rebuild the relationship on a more enduring, more solid bases. This is only healthy and reasonable, and marriage counsellors can testify to this truth.

— By giving the Palestinians the space and room needed, by respecting their autonomy and right to self-determination, Jordan is not just behaving in an extremely civilised and sophisticated manner but is going to inevitably, as it already has, win the full confidence and trust of Palestinians. A vast majority of Palestinians, inside and outside Palestine, respects and admires the Jordanian democratic experience; and a vast majority appreciates Jordan's healthy attitude towards them. This will only help to pave the way, foster and consolidate a future relationship. Long live reason, long live common sense, long live civility, and long live sophistication.

Farewell, Bosnia

For the U.N., the war is over Ian Traynor sums up the humiliation and failures of what will probably be its last 'peacekeeping mission'



did not empower him to use force.

But in early 1993 he witnessed the savagery of the Serb assault on the Bosnian enclave of Srebrenica, pledged to stay in the town to protect it, and declared: "Srebrenica is saved."

For that he was sacked, recalled prematurely to Paris, where he, too, became an interventionist. And 27 months later Srebrenica fell to the Serbs, who perpetrated there the worst single atrocity of the Bosnian war, the murder and rape of thousands of Bosnians. The requests for air strikes from the local Dutch UN commander to stop the Serbs went unheeded. The use of air muscle was authorised by another Security Council resolution. Srebrenica's safety had been guaranteed by yet another. The endless resolutions and formal protests from UN headquarters in New York, it seemed, were worth about as much as the endless accords and ceasefires agreed on paper by the

warring parties.

Humiliation piled on ignominy. The Serbs particularly, but the other sides too, quickly became past masters at taunting the UN manipulating the mission, and exploiting for its own ends. Taxes were charged for the use of roads in Serb-held country. Fifty thousand dollars was demanded for the U.N. to deploy in Serb-held Banja Luka. The money was handed over, salted away, and still the troops were barred entry. Relief convoys were routinely held up for days over some random bureaucratic ruse. If the U.N. banned air transport over Bosnia, General Ratko Mladic of the Serbs would fly over for talks with UN officers in his helicopter. It took a NATO air strike to take place, hundreds of soldiers were taken hostage, tied to bridges, and put on television. The U.N. found itself the effective agent of the Serb siege of Sarajevo, for a long time controlling ac-

cess to the city and patrolling the airport to keep Bosnians from leaving. At a Serb checkpoint on the airport road, UN troops ignored their own rules by opening an armoured car for Serb inspection. The Serbs then murdered a deputy prime minister of Bosnia.

The U.N. response was to issue more empty outraged threats. The only casualty was the organisation's and the mission's credibility.

At the core of the U.N.'s dilemma were two issues — one of the mandate and one of morality. For the first time ever, it was supposed to be keeping the peace in the midst of a raging war — a tall order, an impossible mandate. And to attempt to keep the peace it had to profess to be "neutral" not to take sides in what until last summer was a one-sided war. That meant that thousands of young soldiers were condemned to be spectators at the slaughter, shamed by their own impotence, con-

temptuous of the political power games that kept them from trying to make a difference.

And the U.N. was an easy scapegoat, providing an alibi for the big powers unwilling to grasp the Balkan nettle. The Americans, in particular until now, resolved to keep their ground troops out of Bosnia, constantly waved the big stick of NATO bombers, enraging the British and the French with vulnerable troops on the ground and sparking an enduring row with the UN bigwigs who could not conduct a "neutral" mission on the ground while NATO took sides in the air.

The result of this was another debilitating recipe for paralysis, with a clumsy dualkey command-and-control mechanism in which NATO responded to the latest outrage by clamouring for action and UN politicians in Zagreb and New York sought to stall and sabotage the NATO role.

Akashi in Zagreb and his bosses in New York were made to carry the can for repeated debates when, in fact, the Americans did not want to get involved and no one else was willing to assume the mantle of leadership. But through its control of much of the decision-taking, the mediation effort, the flow of information, the parameters of the military mission, the UN itself was an independent and powerful factor in the Bosnian tragedy.

Now that the Americans are substantially engaged, the UN has been superseded and NATO generals can admire the Greek folly in Zagreb or have it ripped down.

Much hinges still on what happens next in Bosnia. The success or failure of the peace enforcement mission may go a long way to determining the future and survival of the western military alliance.

For the UN Bosnia has been a chastening and defining experience. In all likelihood, the organisation will never again embark on such a peacekeeping mission, such is the mark of the UN's failure. The UN's hopes for keeping the peace after the cold war have been buried in the bloodied fields and bills of Bosnia.

The Guardian

By Dr. Ahmad Majid
in brethren
nted

Christmas in the 90s — surfing the net with Santa

By Sara Henley
Reuters

ROVANIEMI, Finland (R) — Santa Claus has a red mobile phone. You might find him on the Internet. His reindeer will eat 360 different plants, but not carrots. These are the latest facts out of Father Christmas's office on a visit to the Arctic Circle, where he and his helpers are racing to get ready for Christmas.

ing this up." I had asked Santa how he felt about the people who keep imitating him. Particularly in Denmark, where they have held conferences for Santas in the summertime and where there was recently an international Santas' talent contest.

whole argument destroys children's dreams." It became clear why here in Finland, where Santa lives, many children are afraid of him.

ably on his lap and looked around for her present — only to discover that Santa gives gifts only on Christmas Eve.

tough Arctic climate but their favourite food is lichen, a moss-like plant found on rocks and trees.

Daisuke: "Dear Father Christmas, I have a trouble. I am in love with a girl. But I cannot speak with her. Please give me some advice."

Linus Zilinskas from Lithuania is in no doubt: "I know Santa Claus that you do exist."

means Ear Mountain, and Santa says he can hear everything from there. This may explain why he needs a red mobile phone back in Rovaniemi, but I did not dare ask.

From our grandmothers' tongues

Classic Fairy Tales—from Ancient Palestine and Jordan
By Hikmat Ben Odeh
Published by Kanan Press, Irbid, 1995.

To narrate, in writing, the oral history of a national or, in this case, a national past is to engage in the already problematic attempt to transform one storytelling genre into another.

But to write the oral history of a people in a language never used by the narrating sources, is an act that concerns the linguistic force of a narrative, which carries within it the signs and signifiers of cultural norms and form.

To this point later. Hikmat Ben Odeh's Classic Fairy Tales combines six stories with contextual verve. Ben Odeh as narrating subject is a comfortably reliable literary source, being subject to these narrations himself.

These are oral histories, the 'mother tongue' of narration, stories of ogres and ogresses, magical healing and curses; oral histories with twisted plots and plotted twists in lands that are at once familiar and nostalgic.

And no classic fairy tales here. The stories are in fact short epics, with multi-layered plot-lines, circular rather than linear in structure.

Typically, the plots revolve around the union of a 'virtuous couple, and the presence of an evil force. But though the stories do contain elements of the symbolic, (good versus evil) the mundane factor of human behaviourism is integral to the text, allowing for the symbiotic interplay of the earthly and the magical.

It is to the credit of the traditional tales' combination of these elements that Ben Odeh can expose the characters' earthly temptations and human vacillations even within the framework of magical time.

Heroes and heroines, and not all princes and princesses, who are driven more by circumstance than by nature, to seek out fulfilled lives.

Unlike classic English tales where fulfillment is encountered in the happily ever after of marriage, these stories often have marriages occurring in the middle, with fulfillment kept in waiting for the restoration of social order.

And again unlike their European counterparts, whose idyllic ends are met by the luck-abetted courage of handsome princes, by princesses who must first lay dormant in order to re-live, and by evil-doers who never learn to undo an inherent evilness, Ben Odeh's myths speak more naturally of men and women whose fates are tied to their lived experiences.

It is not so strange, (but perhaps an unintended act of 'making strange', to use a term from literary critical practice) therefore, to find these tales replete with human expressions of doubt, love and regret juxtaposed against the mechanisms of magic and fantasy.

Hikmat Ben Odeh relates in writing the traditional stories of Jordan and Palestine's oral mythology. In a different sense, though, the author also 'relates' these stories to an already existing concept of the fairy tale genre, extraneous to the traditional literary sphere of this region, one that is largely Western in form.

An odd combination, to return to the earlier point. Does it matter, in the long run, what language a book is written in or what form of writing it chooses to adopt?

In a book like Ben Odeh's, it could have been possible for many Arab readers to hear the voices of their grandmothers behind the narrative of these tales.

It is puzzling, therefore, that the writer made no attempt to align his narrative with the linguistic substance and form of the original tales, an attempt that would have made his publication all the more richer.

What Ben Odeh achieves in his non-deviation from the Western form and idiom, is a troubling parallel of a cultural oral praxis stumbling in the cloak of discursive stillness and in the borrowing of another culture's literary traditions.

Haya Hussein

BOOK REVIEW

BOOK REVIEW

The state of the Palestinians

The Palestinians — People Or The Olive Tree
By Dr. Kamel Abu Jaber
Jordan Book Centre, JD10

THE author of The Palestinians is a well-known Jordanian personality. He is an internationally respected scholar and politician. Dr. Abu Jaber is a member of the Upper House of Parliament. In 1973 he was minister of national economy and in 1991 minister of foreign affairs. He is presently professor of political science at the University of Jordan. He is the author of many books and articles on the Arab-Israeli conflict, Middle East politics and international relations.

The book is dedicated to the Palestinians, the people of 'the olive tree' the symbol of durability and fortitude. The book includes a historical summary, stories which constitute the bulk of the book, and a short epilogue.

According to the author the Palestinians are the descendants of the Canaanites and the Philistines the very first well-known original inhabitants of Palestine, who are the ancestors of present-day Palestinians. No matter what kind of people conquered Palestine and irrespective of who occupied it, the people of the land remained Palestinian. The conquests of Palestine by foreign rulers, such as for example the Hebrews, were mere episodes in the history of Palestine.

The author has shown that the majority of the present Jews are not of Semitic origin but Khazars who were living in southern Russia and were converted to Judaism in the year 740 A.D. Thus the so-called Jewish historical claim to Palestine is unfounded. In this connection the author refers the reader to Alfred Lilienthal's book The Zionist Connection and to Arthur Koestler's The

Thirteenth Tribe. Both authors, it should be noted, are Jews. In fact when the Arabs entered Jerusalem in 638 AD under the leadership of the Khalif Omar Ibn Al Khattab there were no Jews in Jerusalem.

I agree with the author that if the Palestinians wish to form a state of their own it will be a viable entity thanks to the dedication of the Palestinian people to their country and it would be a focal point of their pride and attention. The author admits, however, that the future Palestinian state would encounter many difficulties but the determination of its people could smooth out these difficulties.

The stories related by Dr. Abu Jaber are factual and not fictitious ones. Those stories will further illuminate the reader about the real tragedy which fell the Palestinian people since their expulsion from Palestine in 1948 and in 1967.

In his endeavour to portray the plight of the Palestinians, the author strives to be accurate and unbiased.

The reader will certainly observe that part of the book had been written before the Oslo Accord of 1993 and the Taba Accord of 1995.

We must thank Dr. Abu Jaber for his well-written and lucid book which describes the state of the Palestinians, their endurance, their ambitions, their ethos, although the book is not meant at all to be the history of Palestine or of the Palestinians.

I have read many books about Palestine and the Palestinians but I feel that the contents of this book touches the heart and soul of every Palestinian.

Pascal Karmy

Give Democracy a Chance

Palestine in Crisis: The Struggle For Peace And Political Independence After Oslo
By Graham Usher
London: Pluto Press, 1995, published in association with Transnational Institute and MERIP, 146 pages, \$15.95.

Graham Usher is a writer based in the Gaza Strip and West Bank. His book, Palestine in Crisis, is the culmination of several years of top-notch investigative journalism. In less than 100 pages, he examines the conditions and issues that impinge on and shape the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) and the future of the Palestinians, in particular their prospects for attaining independence and democracy. The rest of the book consists of three appendices: The texts of the Oslo and Cairo agreements, and the Paris economic protocol. This makes Palestine in Crisis a succinct, yet comprehensive reference for the decisive 1993-95 period of Palestinian history which it covers.

Besides recounting major events, Usher goes beyond the text of the various accords to analyse the political, social and economic dynamics which determine how things actually work out in practice. Among the most informative chapters of the book is that on economy, wherein Usher demonstrates how Israel has been 'quietly shifting from direct economic subjugation of the territories to a 'dominant integration' of them — in other words, from colonialism to neo-colonialism' (p. 39). In 1991, for example — parallel to the Madrid Conference — Israel began building industrial parks in the Gaza Strip and West Bank, and allowing Palestinian investment. This provided jobs locally, while conveniently keeping Palestinian workers out of Israel, and industry in the territories tied to Israeli contractors. Thus the pattern was set for 'political divorce and economic marriage' — what Peres predicted would result from the Oslo accord (p. 35).

In the chapter on civil society, Usher surveys the political opposition, and evaluates the potential of the women's movement and trade unions to challenge the

bureaucratic and authoritarian bent of Arafat's PNA.

The book is especially interesting because it quotes not only famous Palestinian leaders, but also a new generation of articulate political and community leaders and activists. Many of them are critical of Arafat's leadership, as well as of how virtually all Palestinian organisations have functioned. Usher appears to share the views of those who believe that trade unions, NGOs, political parties and women's groups must form a coalition to 'chart an independent course for self-rule in opposition both to the dictates of Israel and the PNA's probable complicity with it' (p. 60). He explicitly advocates a united front of the secular, democratic opposition that would 'steer a course between the autocratic drift of Arafat's coalition of ex-Tunis bureaucrats and Palestine's longstanding elites on the one hand and the sectarian rejectionism advocated by Hamas on the other' (p. 75).

Palestine in Crisis is an indictment of the PLO-Israeli accords and especially of how they are being implemented: '... Since Oslo Israel has succeeded in imposing, and getting, PLO and international covenant for a definition of 'peace' that rests on unconditional security for Israel but extremely conditional security for the Palestinians... the only leverage Arafat now has vis-a-vis Israel is an ever more ruthless implementation of the latter's 'internal security' agenda, with all the negative consequences this has for Palestinian democracy and human rights' (pp. 80-1).

Usher sees it as an ominous sign that since returning to the occupied territories, Arafat has marginalised militants and grassroots activists in favour of the traditional elite. One wishes that he had developed this point further, and included more concrete analysis of current social struggles. Nonetheless, the book provides an excellent background for evaluating the upcoming Palestinian elections, which Usher sees as 'the most significant political struggle of the interim period' (p. 72).

Sally Bland

BOOK REVIEW

NATO menus: Wine for French, not dogs for U.S., beans for Britons

By Jocelyne Zablit
Agence France Presse

AGREB (AFP) — The French NATO troops have asked for six varieties of red and white wine. The Americans would like U.S.-made hot dogs and the Britons want beans and blood sausage for breakfast.

How do you feed 20,000 troops to be employed in Bosnia while taking into account the dietary appetite of the 25 nationalities taking part in the NATO operation?

The answer lies with S. Major. Mary Whitworth, who is in charge of the logistics involved in organising the food distribution for the alliance forces due to arrive in Bosnia in coming weeks.

"I'm involved in planning how the entire force going to be fed," said Maj. Whitworth, who is

at the NATO Command Center in Zagreb working out the tricky details with a team of 18 people due to increase to 374 when the operation gets into full swing.

"You have to plan for transportation, distribution, refrigeration and take into consideration the cultural and ethnic differences involved," Maj. Whitworth, the mother of three children, said. Her division also has to coordinate the distribution of fuel, ammunition, construction material as well as laundry and bath supplies.

In addition the road and weather conditions, often treacherous in winter, have to be taken into account.

"We're the key to logistics in this theatre," Maj. Whitworth said. Her unit in previous months has drawn up 30 different menus that would hopefully cover everyone's

needs. The 20,000 American soldiers will be able to pick from 14 lunch and dinner menus and 10 breakfast menus that will be rotated daily to provide a little diversity such as pancakes and waffles. The menu for Pakistani troops will feature rice and tea.

Some nationalities such as the French will have their menus — often envied by fellow GIs — concocted by their own chefs.

Maj. Whitworth said that a contractor currently supplying U.N. troops in Bosnia would continue working for the alliance once the NATO troops deploy.

She said the American soldiers would initially dine on MREs (meals ready to eat) or tray rations and within 30 days of their deployment start eating fresh foods.

The 2,500 short tonnes (each tonne equals 2,000

pounds) of foodstuff to be delivered daily to the troops would include the basics in terms of fresh, canned and frozen foods while "comfort items" such as soft drinks or candy will be supplied by individual nations, Maj. Whitworth said.

In addition, she said, each soldier gets an average of two to three liters of drinking water a day.

The logistics unit has also developed a four-page handbook enumerating what it means to be "logistically robust."

"It means that you have everything you need in terms of fuel, food, vehicle repair and laundry and bath information," she said.

Asked whether she was bracing for a deluge of special requests once soldiers from the up to 25 countries sending troops are deployed, Maj. Whitworth said: "They haven't come out and asked for anything yet but I'm sure they will."

Wasley, an epidemiologist in the CDC's division of environmental hazards and health effects, said: "We don't have any evidence to substantiate or contradict any of these claims."

Proponents of the tea say its use dates as far back as China's Tsung Dynasty in 221 B.C. It has been touted as a cure for AIDS, cancer, multiple sclerosis, arthritis, rheumatism and fatigue and

has even been said to produce immortality.

"We haven't seen any evidence to document the claims," Dr. Wasley said.

While the tea contains B vitamins produced by yeast and bacteria, he said, drinking Kombucha tea was not the recommended way to get vitamin B.

In March, the Food and Drug Administration warned that Kombucha mushroom tea has not been

approved as a treatment for any medical condition.

To make the tea, a starter culture is added to a mixture of black tea and sugar and the resulting mix is allowed to ferment for a week or more. The FDA said "harmful quantities of lead and other toxic elements" could be produced in the tea if it is

fermented in certain types of containers such as ceramic and painted containers or lead crystal.

U.S. says 'cure-all' tea may kill instead

By Mike Cooper
Reuters

ATLANTA — Kombucha mushroom tea, a drink reputed to prevent cancer, relieve arthritis, cure insomnia and make hair grow, could pose a serious health risk, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has warned.

The CDC said an Iowa

woman died in April and another woman became seriously ill after they drank the tea every day for two months. The beverage, which is made by fermenting yeasts and bacteria in black tea and sugar, is also called "Kargasok tea," "tea fungus," and "Manchurian mushroom tea," even though it is not made from mushrooms.

The two women in a

rural town in northeastern Iowa developed severe lactic acidosis, in which their blood had excessive levels of the acid found in sour milk. Researchers found no known toxins in the tea the women drank but they could point to no other cause for the women's illness.

The tea is said to contain an acid that has a strongly anti-bacterial effect, but Dr. Annemarie

THOUGHTS FOR THIS WEEK

Beware of all enterprises that require new clothes — Henry David Thoreau, U.S. writer (1817-1862).

Before buying anything, it is well to ask whether one could not do without it — John Lubbock, English astronomer, mathematician (1803-1865).

A happy life must be to a great extent a quiet life, for it is only in an atmosphere of quiet that true joy can live — Bertrand Russell, British philosopher (1872-1970).

It is occasionally possible to charge hell with a bucket of water but against stupidity the gods themselves struggle in vain — Doris Fleeson, American syndicated columnist (1901-1970).

Roots

By Jean-Claude Elias

When the PC revolution started back in the early eighties, only a few manufacturers had the structure and the resources to design, manufacture and market the new machines. Apple, IBM, Olivetti, NCR, Tandy and Commodore were the main names among less than a dozen who controlled the market.

Like it is the case for most manufactured goods such as cars, TV sets and others, not all the components in a PC were from the source. The main microprocessor could be from Intel or Motorola, the hard disk from Seagate and the monitor tube from Philips for example. However, the machine as a whole had one name.

With time, the technology which at first seemed a little obscure to the non-initiated became obvious to any party with a minimum technical background. If students could assemble a small atomic bomb in their kitchen (given some uranium, I admit), why couldn't little factories produce PCs?

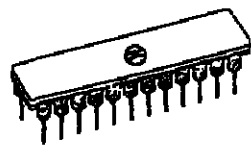
So entered the Taiwanese. Realising that assembling small computers basically required purchasing the right separate modules, they invaded the world, including the U.S. market, with clones priced at about 30 to 40 per cent less than the original manufacturers.

Buying the main chips from Intel, Motorola, Hitachi, Siemens, Philips and Mitsubishi, the hard disks from Seagate, Conner and Western Digital, and so forth, they took a huge share of the business from the well-established big names. From 1987 to 1994, most users making a quick price comparison between an original machine made in Europe or the U.S. and a clone made in Taiwan (or Singapore or Korea) would decide for the latter.

Technically speaking, on paper at least, there was no major difference between the two kinds of machines. They would do the same work, at the same speed.

By mid-1994, the aforementioned big names (IBM, etc.)

chip talk



counterattacked, making a comeback based on a sound, clear strategy. Offering machines that have a significant edge in terms of reliability and priced only 10 to 15 per cent more than those made in the Far East, Hewlett-Packard, IBM, AT&T are now regaining most of the lost ground. Users gladly pay this small difference for an original computer. The price of PC failures and maintenance is much higher than any saving one can make on the purchase.

PCs have become very sophisticated machines. The quality of each of the components (memory, screen, and so on) is critical to the overall performance of the whole system. Moreover, a PC assembled and well-tested by a single party has a higher MTBF (Mean Time Between Failure), giving the user a better guarantee of uninterrupted and comfortable operating. The West, mainly the U.S., has always controlled the software market. Their taking control, one more time, of the hardware is only a natural phenomenon.

Does this mean the days of the Far Eastern computers are counted? Industry leaders in Singapore, Taiwan and Korea are clever enough to think of something new. In the meantime, U.S. manufacturers of PC computers are smiling.

Human secrets that baffle all

By Samer Ghaleb Bagaeen

Today's article is being brought to you with a little help from an old French teacher of mine, though she does not know this yet.

In 1878, a certain Mr. Burgon, quoting one Dr. Martin J. Routh, wrote that "you will find it a very good practice to always verify your references."

Now the only reason I know this is that last week I was quoting my old French teacher's statement and I wondered afterwards who had first said this. I looked it up a couple of days ago, and now I know.

Or to put it another way, now I don't have the faintest idea. I have no idea who Dr. Routh was and know even less who Mr. Burgon was. And I have the least desire to know who they were. So, in this case at least, it was a waste of time to have verified my references as they seemed meaningless.

Still, the one good thing about verifying your references is that it gradually turns into browsing and you start discovering new things instead of checking up on old ones. For example, the other day, I came across two excellent reflections on life in a survey of modern sayings and catch phrases. One of them was: "We must believe in luck. How else can we explain the success of those we don't like?"

The other said: "The very purpose of existence is to reconcile the growing opinion we have of ourselves with the appalling things that other people think about us."

One of those is from the French composer Erik Satie and the other from a certain Quentin Crisp. And you should be able to tell which is which if only because the first one has a slight trace of translation. An English speaker would have been more likely to have said "We must believe in the existence of

luck."

To add to this, there is no doubt that these things sound better in French. Take, for example, the French saying (whose source I do not know): "Partir, c'est mourir un peu." Undoubtedly, this is a great phrase, but one which does not have an exact version in English. "To part is to die a little"? No! A musician once did a good version in the song "Every time we say good-bye. I die a little", but it is twice as long. Shakespeare did quite nicely though with "Parting is such sweet sorrow..."

An expert writes: Don't be silly. It is not such anecdotes that the intellect and esteemed journalism should strive after. It is decent, inquisitive — though controlled and purposeful — ideas, and meaningful analyses that we seek. We want articles that make us tingle with enthusiasm. Articles of burning noble words that appeal to our sentiments. Articles with luminous words, like a flash of lightning in a serene sky!...er...ahem... Articles that highlight our values, principles and morals. Articles that take pride in our past, our present and believe in our future. Articles that herald a future characterised by dialogue and respect for human rights, by opportunities for all without discrimination, by equality and social justice, and, above all, by a democratic way of life. Articles that advocate an architecture where even bus stops are individually designed instead of being turned into boxes and placards for advertisers.

So get writing, there's a good citizen. Thank you!

These words go out with the warmest wishes for a happy and prosperous 1996 for all.

HOWLERS

— PERSPIRATION is composed of two acts: First inspiration and then expectation.

— WHAT is a microbe? A robe that mics wear.

— THE LARYNX is a voice box and shuts when we swallow it.

— THE BOWELS are a, e, i, o, u, and sometimes w and y.

— MY favourite character in English history is Henry VIII because he had eight wives and killed them all.

— P.S. was thought to mean — precious stones, plug cistern, police station, Piccadilly circus, professor of science, people's saviour, public services and pick something.

LET'S CHAT IN ARABIC

** He is a liar, a cheat and a hypocrite.

Innahu kazib, ghush'shah wa munafiq.

** Don't call me bad names.

La tassobboni.

** Stop this dirty game.

Imtani' an hathehil lu'bal qathirah.

ON THE LIGHTER SIDE

MOHAMMAD A. SHUQAIR

** Show me the last of you.

Areni arda qafaq/Insarif.

** You've made my head swim.

Lakad dawwakhtani.

** Your tongue drops honey.

Lisanak yanqotu asalan. (sometimes said sarcastically)

** Foe on you!

Ikhs alaik!

** Shame on you!

Ayb alaik!

** Go to hell!

Faltazhab lil-jahim.

** Down with war-mongers!

Falyasqut tajarul huroob!

JOKES

— A PERSON used to hate his mother-in-law. As soon as the Eid approached, she declared, "I'll pay half of my life for anyone who buys me a sheep."

"Well, I'm ready to buy you two," said he promptly.

TEACHER: "If we have a mixture of salt and sugar. How can we separate them?"

PUPIL: "I'll bring some ants which would eat sugar and leave salt."

HIGHWAYMAN: "Give me all you have, or I'll kill you."

TRAVELLER: "Please set me free. If I go home without money, my wife will blacken my life."

HIGHWAYMAN: "...and so will my wife!"

BANK OF KNOWLEDGE

1. What words would an American use instead of - biscuit; a lift; a plot of ground; a caretaker; a waistcoat?

2. A simile is a figure of speech in which one thing is said to be like or as another. Can you complete these similes—

— This place is as dead as the.....

— He is as mad as.....

— Her teeth were like.....

3. Three of these spellings are wrong- isthmus; harass; grammar; the reign of the horse; accomodation.

4. Can you make an anagram, to give the name of a famous lady, from the letters in "Flit on, cheering angel."

5. Give FIVE words that have the same beginning and end.

PUZZLES

IF two and a half burglars rob three and a half houses in four and a half hours, how many houses will five burglars rob in nine hours?

Thursday, Dec. 28, 1995

1:00 Iris - The Happy Professor
1:15 Fireman Sam
1:25 Hurricanes
1:50 My Secret Identity
2:10 NBA
3:00 The New Leave It To Beaver
3:30 The White Heat
4:30 Gillette World Sport Special
5:00 French Programme
Sophie Et Virginie
5:30 Varieties
Le Monde Est A Vous
7:00 Le Journal
7:15 Magazine
Archimede
7:30 News Headlines
7:35 Carol And Company
8:00 The Album Show
8:50 The New Avengers
10:00 News In English
10:25 Movie — Guinevere
Starring: Sherry Lee & Sean-Patrick Flanery
12:00 The Fifth Missile

Friday, Dec. 29, 1995

1:00 The Little Mermaid
1:30 Beethoven
1:45 Lift-Off
2:00 Wonder Why
2:25 Super Carrier
3:15 Goldrush In Alaska
4:05 Give Us A Clue
5:00 French Programme
Sophie Et Virginie
5:30 Film
Tati Danifie
7:00 Le Journal
7:15 Magazine
Sports Et Musique
7:30 News Headlines
7:35 Short Stories Cinema
8:00 Natural Wonders Of Europe
8:45 America's Funniest People
9:10 Widows (Ep. I)
10:00 News In English
10:25 Second Chances
11:30 Feature Film — Happy New Year
Starring: Peter Falk & Charles Durning

JTV CHANNEL 2 WEEKLY PREVIEW

Saturday, Dec. 30, 1995

2:00 Moomins
2:30 Harry And The Hendersons
3:00 Blue Heelers
3:45 Only In Hollywood
4:05 I Love Lucy
4:35 Sky Trackers
5:00 French Programme
Ordy
5:15 Children Programme
Les Badaboks
5:30 Serie
Fruit Et Legumes
6:00 Serie
Cest Mon Histoire
7:00 Le Journal
7:15 Magazine
Faut Pas Rever
7:30 News Headlines
7:35 Major Dad
8:00 The Stamp Of Greatness
8:25 The Bold And The Beautiful
9:10 Star Trek — The Next Generation
10:00 News In English
10:25 Feature: "Deadly Medicine"
Starring: Veronica Hamel & Suzan Rutan
11:50 Behaving Badly (Part 2)

Sunday, Dec. 31, 1995

2:00 The Flintstones
2:30 Joshua Jones
2:45 Droopy Master Detective
3:00 Scientific Eye
3:30 Family Playhouse
3:40 Pugwall's Summer
4:00 I Love Lucy
4:30 Sky Trackers
5:00 French Programme
Ordy
5:15 Children's Programme
Les Badaboks
5:30 Serie
Fruits Et Legumes
5:50 Varieties
Jean-Michel Jarre
7:00 Le Journal
7:15 Magazine

Sports Et Musique
7:30 News Headlines
7:35 Boogies Diner
8:00 Cinema, Cinema
8:25 The Bold & The Beautiful
9:10 Labours Of Eve
9:35 Heartbeat
10:00 News In English
10:25 Musical Concert
"Shirley Bassey"
11:05 New Year's Eve Concert
"A Tribute To Sarajevo"
Live From Sarajevo

Monday, Jan. 1, 1996

2:00 Shelly Duvall's Bedtime Stories
2:30 Richie Rich
3:00 Playabout
3:15 Bustin' Loose
3:40 Animals Of The Mediterranean
4:00 I Love Lucy
4:30 Sky Trackers
5:00 French Programme
Ordy
5:15 Children Programme
Les Badaboks
5:30 Serie
Les Compagnons De L'Aventure
5:50 Magazine
C'Est Pas Sorcier
6:20 Family Programme
L'Ecole Des Fans
7:00 Le Journal
7:15 Magazine
Cinq Sur Cinq
7:30 News Headlines
7:35 McHale Navy
8:00 Invention
8:25 The Bold And The Beautiful
9:10 Star Trek — The Next Generation
10:00 News In English
10:25 Anna (Drama)
11:10 Taurus Rising
12:00 Ellen

Tuesday, Jan. 2, 1996

2:00 Captain Planet
2:30 Jonny Quest

2:50 Spirit Of Adventure
3:40 Scientific Eye
4:30 Voyagers
5:00 French Programme
Ordy
5:15 Children Programme
Les Badaboks
5:30 Serie
Les Compagnons De L'Aventure
6:00 Medical Magazine
Savoir Plus Sante
7:00 Le Journal
7:15 Magazine
Ushuaia
7:30 News Headlines
7:35 You Bet Your Life
8:00 The Secret Of The Treasure Islands
8:25 The Bold And The Beautiful
9:10 99-1 (Police Drama) Ep. II
10:00 News In English
10:25 I'll Take Manhattan Ep. IV
11:15 Feature: "Night Hunt"
Starring: Stephanic Powers & Helen Shaver

Wednesday, Jan. 3, 1996

2:00 Inspector Gadget
2:30 Ghost Writer
3:00 Bill Nye The Science Guy
3:30 Amazing Stories
4:00 Voyagers
5:00 French Programme
Sophie Et Virginie
5:30 Serie
Des Heros Ordinaires
7:00 Le Journal
7:15 Magazine
Sports Et Musique
7:30 News Headlines
7:35 Anything For A Laugh
8:00 The Nature Of Things
8:25 The Bold And The Beautiful
9:10 Horizon "The Peasant Premier"
10:00 News In English
10:25 Prism
10:45 Law And Order
11:15 The Silk Road
12:30 Second Thoughts

Geena Davis — captain of her own ship

By Steve James
Reuter

BEVERLY HILLS, California — Don't call Geena Davis a feminist heroine, even though her movie roles have included a bored housewife on a violent cross-country drive of self-discovery, a baseball player and now that most macho of characters — a pirate.

"I played it strictly as a female character. This is the way I approached it — someone who is all-woman," Davis said of her character as a swashbuckling Errol Flynn-type buccaner in the action adventure *Cutthroat Island*.

The film, which opened on Dec. 22, includes several scenes in which Davis' dagger, cutlass or blunderbuss take more than passing contact with male characters' private parts. But she dismisses suggestions she plays 17th century pirate captain Morgan Adams as an avenging feminist — any more than her character in *Thelma And Louise*, which was perceived by many as anti-male.

"You know, that character wasn't even intended to be a icon. It just happened," he said of the ground-breaking film in which she and Susan Sarandon played women who leave their numdrum lives, drive west and end up killing a rapist and engaging in a string of rimes before self-destruct-



Actress Geena Davis portrays the fearless pirate Morgan Adams in a scene from her new film *Cutthroat Island* (Reuter photo)

"We never thought that's what we were doing at the time. We thought we were playing these really cool characters that we loved. And it was kind of shocking to us to find ourselves on the cover of *Time* maga-

zine and we were like, 'wow, what the hell happened?' Davis said in a recent interview. "They're not role models. If you pick it apart, we drive drunk and kill ourselves. We do incredibly wrong things for the right reasons but at

least we're in charge of our own lives," she said.

Being in charge of her life is important to Davis, who won an Oscar as best supporting actress in *The Accidental Tourist* and was nominated for best actress in *Thelma And Louise*. Her last acclaimed role was in *A League Of Their Own* in which she played a female baseball player.

"My character in this movie (*Cutthroat Island*) is totally in charge of her own life and her own destiny and those are the kind of characters that appeal to me," Davis said. "Whatever they do, right or wrong, at least they're captain of their own ship."

Asked if she saw herself as captain of her own ship in real life, she said: "Oh, yes. I decided I wanted specifically to be a movie star from the age of three. It makes me blush, and I could say I wanted to be an actress, but it was specifically movies and I wanted to be a famous movie star."

Playing in a period adventure movie was something Davis had wanted to do for a long time.

"In that time period, people were totally re-inventing themselves. In that era, in that place, there was complete lawlessness. There were some notoriously outrageous women," she said of the 17th-century setting. "So that was the kind of



Actress Geena Davis (left), seen here with co-star Matthew Modine (right), in a scene for her new film *Cutthroat Island* (Reuter photo)

approach I took. She slept with whom she wanted, she drank what she wanted — the kind of person who'd rather get in a brawl than discuss something, which is a little bit unique for a female character."

In the film, which also stars Matthew Modine and Frank Langella, Davis gets into brawls, falls off cliffs, drives a carriage and horses at breakneck speed and

leaps from the rigging of galleons while searching for Caribbean treasure.

But she did not expect concessions because she is a woman, and certainly not because the Finnish director, Renny Harlin, just happens to be her husband of 2 1/2 years. "Renny wanted to avoid the impression I was getting special treatment. I didn't get any slack for being his wife," she

laughed.

Harlin, who won fame as director of such box-office blockbusters as *Cliffhanger* and *Die Hard 2: Die Harder*, made *Speechless* with Davis last year. They will be on the set together again next month in Toronto for *The Long Kiss Goodnight*, for which Davis has shorn her shoulder-length auburn tresses in favour of a short, blonde bob.

Cutthroat Island, filmed in Malta and Thailand, had more than the usual headaches for a director making a \$70 million production. Following reports that Michael Douglas, Liam Neeson and Ralph Fiennes had all turned down the lead role opposite Davis, production company Carolco filed for bankruptcy protection and sold its assets to 20th Century Fox.



Actor Sir Anthony Hopkins is seen in his role as United States President Richard M. Nixon in the film *Nixon*, directed by Oliver Stone (Reuter photo)

Stone shows restraint in Nixon film

By Jerry Dubrowski
Reuter

LOS ANGELES — Director Oliver Stone, often accused by critics of going over the top with conspiracy theories and bizarre plots, has discovered restraint.

In his latest film, *Nixon*, the 49-year-old Stone takes an almost sympathetic view of America's 37th president, portraying him as a tragic figure whose own insecurities and demons lead to his downfall more than 20 years ago.

That Stone choose not to vilify Nixon in the film, which opened across the United States Wednesday, may surprise many who thought he would cast the late president as a ruthless leader who nearly ripped the country apart. But for Stone, the three-hour plus film was a chance to show the human side of Nixon, something few filmmakers have been able to capture.

"It wasn't in our interest to do a hatchet job on him because that had been done so much," he said. "Maybe because Nixon had been vilified for so long ... we tended to go more in the opposite direction and say 'let's examine this man.'"

The film, released by Hollywood Pictures, features Anthony Hopkins as Nixon, Joan Allen as his wife Pat, James Woods as Nixon's right-hand man

H.R. Haldeman, Paul Sorvino as Henry Kissinger, J.T. Walsh as John Ehrlichman and David Hyde Pierce as John Dean, the aide who aptly described the Watergate crisis as a cancer on the presidency.

While not favourable to Nixon, the film delivers an almost benevolent view of his internal struggle to overcome his strict upbringing, the death of his two brothers and the crushing defeat to John Kennedy in the 1960 election.

"The concept we went with was that early on in his life, with his father and his mother putting that kind of pressure on him to be a good boy and to be a virtuous boy, followed by the death of his two brothers ... (it) left him with the idea that he had to perform and that he had to be the flag-ship of the family, that he had to come through and he had to be the best," Stone said.

"He was a warrior," Stone said. "You've got to give him that. You may not like the man ... You may hate him but you've got to admire him and respect him for fighting."

In that sense, Stone said he identifies with Nixon. Four years ago, Stone's JFK was ridiculed by historians and journalists for twisting facts to support the theory that Kennedy was assassinated by the CIA

and a group of other key government officials because he wanted to end the Vietnam War. The film helped earn Stone the label of a conspiracy nut, which still bothers him today.

"This falls between entertainment and history," Stone said of his work. "It is a dramatization. If the intention, the spirit is there, if you are hewing to the facts and you understand them and condensing them in that manner, then I believe you are on the right side of the tracks."

To avoid a repeat of the critical hailstorm that greeted JFK, Stone went to great pains to document the events that led to Nixon's fall from grace, even going so far to publish a 189-page annotated version of the screenplay, written with Stephen Rivele and Christopher Wilkinson.

Nevertheless, some Nixon loyalists may not be completely satisfied with Hopkins' portrayal of the president as a drunken, pill-popping fumbler whose marriage was on the rocks. While Stone says he has plenty of support for his claims, former Nixon aide Alexander Butterfield, who served as a technical adviser on the film, said he never saw Nixon drunk. "Nixon was sort of anti-booze. He might have a Scotch now and then, but that was very rare in that first four years," Butterfield said.

More troubling to critics is Stone's assertion that Nixon knew about an alleged CIA plot to kill Cuba's Fidel Castro and that later it got turned around and led to the assassination of Kennedy in 1963. The film contends Nixon was involved in the planning of the CIA plot against Castro when he was vice president during the Eisenhower administration, but historians have found no evidence for that assertion.

Stone says it is possible to assume Nixon knew about the plot. "Why is it so difficult on that basis to make one little leap of faith and say, Nixon, who knew so much about foreign affairs and about Cuba, especially, would not know about the attempted assassination of Mr. Castro?" he asked.

Castro aside, Stone's Nixon is constantly haunted by the ghost of Kennedy. At one point in the film, when Pat Nixon tries to reach her distant husband, he dismisses her affection by saying "I'm not Jack Kennedy."

In another scene, just after he agrees to step down, Nixon stands in front of the White House portrait of Kennedy and mutters: "When they look at you they see what they'd like to be. When they see me, they see what they really are."

Perlman discovers Klezmer music

By Jon Kalish
Reuter

NEW YORK — Times change. Now the Fiddler on the Roof plays a Stradivarius.

Itzhak Perlman, the classical superstar violinist, has discovered Klezmer, the sometimes joyous, sometimes mournful instrumental music of the lost world of East European Jewry.

The 50-year-old Perlman has recorded an album with America's top Klezmer bands, performing everything from soulful Hasidic melodies to wedding waltzes. "It just sort of came naturally," he said. "I had it in my ears and what was amazing to me was that when I started to play, it took me like four or five seconds and I just felt at home."

Perlman's foray into Klezmer began last summer with a visit to a Jewish music festival in Krakow, Poland and a surprise appearance at a Klezmer all-star concert at Lincoln Centre in New York. Both were filmed for *In The Fiddler's House*, an hour-long public television documentary.

Perlman had such a good time at the two concerts that he also decided to record an album with four U.S. Klezmer groups: Brave Old World, the Klezmatics, the Andy Statman Klezmer Orchestra and the Klezmer Conservatory Band. The CD, also titled *In The Fiddler's House*, is on Angel Records and is being sold in the classical music sections of record stores.

Holding up his violin, Perlman asked: "When (Antonio Stradivari) made this fiddle, did he ever imagine that it would ever play Klezmer?"

Probably not. But then Perlman's fans would never expect him to be waiting away on an electric violin with the Klezmatics, a New York group known for fusing jazz, rock and Middle Eastern music with Klezmer. The last time he played a wired fiddle was 20 years ago at a bluegrass festival in Colorado.

It is not that Perlman has just discovered the joys of Klez, as devotees refer to the music. He heard it on the radio as a child growing up in Israel, and a few years ago he sat in with a Klezmer band at his daughter's wedding.

"I think that, like a lot of people, at first he thought that Klezmer music was something you heard at a wedding and that was the



Classical superstar violinist Itzhak Perlman (lower left) poses with Klezmer musicians (clockwise from left) Mimi Rabson, Michael Alpert, Deborah Strauss and Alicia Svigals. The 50-year-old Perlman recorded an album with some of America's top Klezmer bands, which feature the sometimes joyous, sometimes mournful instrumental music of the lost world of East European Jewry (Reuter photo)

beginning and the end of it," said Sara Lukinson, one of the producers of the TV documentary. "I don't think he knew that it had so much variety, so much depth, so many musical flavours that had to be explored. The more he got into it, the richer the music got both musically and emotionally."

The Klezmer musicians who found themselves in the unenviable role of teaching the great Itzhak Perlman were impressed with his dedication as a student. "I think we were all astounded by his ability not only to pick up the style but his seriousness in taking on its demands," said Hankus Netsky, director of the Boston-based Klezmer Conservatory Band.

"The first time he would play through one of the pieces I would think 'okay, well, that sounds good,' and

the second time it would be 'well, that sounds very good,' and the third time it would be better than anybody I had ever heard play the music and the fourth time it would just be, you know, Itzhak Perlman."

One way Perlman familiarised himself with the genre was to do a lot of listening. He listened to a tape of Jewish violin recordings made from old 78's "night and day" for weeks. "I definitely felt that I was on the outside looking in and hopefully I'm maybe a couple of steps in the door right now. Maybe," he said.

Michael Alpert, a member of the Brave Old World Band, believes Perlman's flirtation with Klezmer will be good for the small but thriving Klezmer scene. "It's certainly a very significant and important gesture of support for the music and

those of us who have been making the music for a number of years," Alpert said. "I think we could end up achieving the status of polka."

Perlman's interest and hunger for Klezmer music are said to have grown as a result of the TV show and the CD project. The buzz in the New York "Klezmer community" is that he wants to play more Klezmer.

Asked about rumours of him doing Klezmer concerts next summer in New York and the American middle west, Perlman said: "The will is definitely there. I would love to occasionally get together and play it. I think that the music is so wonderful. When you see the faces of the people who come to these concerts, you say 'hey, we've got to do this again.'"

baffle

PUZZLES

Women at double risk from the 'big disease'

By Ammu Joseph

PUNE, India — Deformed by disease, Dukhi was escorted to the leprosy home by her husband. "I have vowed before God and my villagers that you are dead to me and my children," her husband said. "The funeral feast has been held and I have performed the funeral rites." She would never see her children again.

The incident is recounted by feminist publisher Urvashi Butalia, author of *The Story Within The Story*, an account of a Danish aid project's effort to involve women in leprosy work in order to extend community outreach and thereby improve detection and treatment of leprosy among women.

The title suggests the lesson of her research: That everyone with leprosy suffers, but that women often suffer more — or at least in ways that are frequently overlooked.

Now a new study, *Double Jeopardy: Women And Leprosy In India*, has aroused fierce controversy by going even further. The three authors argue not only that women are victims of a double discrimination trap — in clinical diagnosis and in their daily lives as they cope with sexual discrimination and the stigma of the disease — but that as a result, current efforts to deal with the disease are inadequate.

Much of the controversy is focused on the report's suggestion that the number of women with leprosy has been underestimated. This flies in the face of international figures which show that women are less prone than men to "the big disease" (as it is widely known in India); perhaps because of protection by hormones.

"The lower prevalence rate among women is not peculiar to India," says Dr.

N. K. Singh, the World Health Organisation (WHO) representative in Delhi. "It has been reported from every country." WHO says there are an estimated 2.2 million cases in the world, more than half of them in India. About 600,000 cases are detected each year.

Dr. Singh warns of the dangers of generalising from a specific area — in this case, urban slums — and points out that the comparatively large number of women apparently found in the study may be the result of their being driven from their villages by social stigma. In other words, the general worldwide ratio of two male leprosy sufferers for every female sufferer may be correct, even if the ratio is less in particular settings.

Seemantinee Khot still believes that female leprosy patients go uncounted, but she and her colleagues Carol Vlassoff and Shoba Rao are by no means concerned only with numbers. They pinpoint a range of special problems faced by women, including side-effects on pregnancy from careless use of the multi-drug therapy (MDT), which WHO describes as "the weapon that now seems certain to stop the disease in its tracks," the likelihood of being thrown out of the family home; and the reduced chances of marriage. Men with leprosy also face stigma and discrimination. Some, for example, are pressured to leave their village, just as women are.

What the research found, however, is that the discrimination is more common and more extreme for women — the number of women divorced, separated or widowed, for example, was at least double that of men. Many of the women who said they were married were in fact living alone and had not seen their husbands for years. One 70-year-old in the study said that she was married but that "presently he is not living with me." It turned out that she had not seen her husband for 50 years. Such statements indicate the vulnerability of women alone: Saying they are married offers psychological comfort and helps protect them from unwanted advances from other men with leprosy.

Some women said that the most difficult adjustment was to stop touching people, especially their children, which they were frequently forbidden to do. "Women were accustomed to receiving reinforcement for their caring role by the freedom to touch and be touched... It was touch, more than anything, that women longed for, and the loss of this intimate female right symbolised isolation and rejection," say the researchers.

The list of hurts and disadvantages is long and, say the authors, generally stems from their lower status in society. The predominance of male health workers is another factor. Men, for instance, cannot examine women's bodies, so the opportunity for early diagnosis is missed. That gives the disease a chance to reach a point where deformities begin to occur.

Women's "invisibility" has a long tradition. In an article in the current issue of the *Journal of Oral History*, Sanjiv Kakkar, who has conducted scores of interviews with past and present leprosy patients all over India, says that "written narrative is virtually silent on the women patient." In colonial records, he notes, "the female leprosy patient achieves visibility only when her sexuality is perceived as constituting a threat to order within the asylum... Beyond this, the female patient simply does not exist, except as an

appendage to male patients."

There is some recognition of these problems. Urvashi Butalia points out that in the states of Orissa, Tamil Nadu and Madhya Pradesh women workers from other government programmes have been brought in to help. With a little training, village women are promoting early detection by looking at the bodies of women bathing in the local pond, nurses are trained to examine women for the skin patches which are a sign of the illness, and Mahila Mandals (village women's groups) are taught to discuss issues relating to women and leprosy.

A review of the Indian government's anti-leprosy drive by one of its financial backers, the Danish aid agency Danida, confirms that detection and treatment of female leprosy cases needs much greater attention. WHO's Dr. Singh says the Indian government has definitely taken note of the issue.

Ms. Khot, a social worker specialising in women's health, says that though she encountered some hostility from leprosy professionals — mainly over the issue of numbers — she was invited to present the team's research findings to WHO's policymaking Joint Coordinating Board.

Apart from any improvements in the fight leprosy which their work may bring about, Ms. Khot and her colleagues emphasise another potentially important byproduct: Their findings help focus on the importance of gender differences in diseases — "And failure to pay attention to such differences may be an important obstacle to disease prevention and control" — Panos Features.

Cholesterol lowering treatment shown to save lives, prevent heart attacks in elderly

ANAHEIM, California (Agencies) — New results from the landmark Scandinavian Simvastatin Survival Study (4S) indicate that treating elderly patients who have heart disease and high cholesterol with Simvastatin, the most potent of available cholesterol-lowering medication, reduced the risk of death from any cause by 34 per cent. These data were presented at the American Heart Association's 68th scientific sessions.

"Some physicians have previously questioned the value of testing and lowering cholesterol in elderly patients with elevated cholesterol," said William P. Castelli, M.D., medical director of the Framingham Cardiovascular Institute. "But this new research now definitively shows that treating elderly patients with heart disease and high cholesterol using Simvastatin saves lives."

The Scandinavian Simvastatin Survival Study with Simvastatin is the only clinical trial to demonstrate that long-term cholesterol-lowering therapy substantially improves survival, reduces the risk of heart attacks and reduced the need for costly hospitalisations and surgical procedures in patients with coronary heart disease (CHD) and high cholesterol.

The effects of cholesterol-lowering treatment on the elderly were examined in a subset of the 4,444-45 patients, examining those who were 65-70 years old when starting the trial and were 70-75 years old by the end of the trial. The subset comprised 528 patients who were treated with Simvastatin and 508 patients who received placebo. Simvastatin produced clinical benefits in these older patients that were significant as the benefits observed in the total patient population.

Elderly patients taking Simvastatin were significantly less likely to experience a cardiovascular event during the five-year study than those who received placebo. In elderly patients, treatment with Simvastatin:

- Reduced the risk of death by 34 per cent;
 - reduced the risk of death by coronary heart disease by 43 per cent;
 - reduced the risk of major coronary events (coronary heart disease plus non-fatal heart attack) by 34 per cent; and
 - reduced the risk of invasive procedures to clear blocked arteries by 42 per cent.
- "The results are unequivocally positive," said Terje Pedersen, M.D., coordinator of the Scandinavian Simvastatin Survival Study, and head of the Coronary Care Unit at Aker Hospital in Oslo, Norway. "When life expectancy is not otherwise limited age should not disqualify a patient with coronary heart disease and high cholesterol from receiving cholesterol-lowering therapy," he added.

- In the elderly patients studied, Simvastatin:
 - Reduced total cholesterol by 26 per cent;
 - reduced LDL cholesterol (or "bad" cholesterol) by 35 per cent;
 - increased HDL cholesterol (or "good" cholesterol) by 8 per cent; and
 - reduced triglycerides by 10 per cent.
- In clinical trials, Simvastatin was generally well-tolerated. Most commonly reported side effects include headache (3.5 per cent), abdominal pain (3.2 per cent), constipation (2.9 per cent), flatulence (1.9 per cent), and diarrhoea (1.9 per cent). In the Scandinavian Simvastatin Survival Study, rates of discontinuation due to adverse effects were comparable in the placebo group and the group treated with Simvastatin (13 per cent with placebo vs. 10 per cent with Simvastatin). Rarely, Simvastatin has been associated with liver and muscle problems. Patients experiencing unexplained muscle pain or weakness while taking Simvastatin should notify their doctor immediately.

The fight goes on for Thalidomide's victims

By Maggie Fox Reuter

LONDON — Their births were a nightmare for their parents and hospital staff — severely deformed babies missing arms and legs, some with damaged internal organs.

The few who survived were not expected to live long, dependent on others for their short, painful existences.

But the Thalidomide babies have surprised even themselves, with hundreds not only surviving into their 30s but raising families and holding down jobs.

Trust funds meant to pay for a few years of difficult childhood are under strain. And as Thalidomide sufferers fight for compensation for their disabilities, they are finding, to their horror, that Thalidomide is making a comeback.

The drug was a popular sedative sold in 46 countries between 1957 and 1962, considered so safe that it could be prescribed to calm morning sickness caused by pregnancy.

It was not until May 1961 that it was found to be one of the worst mutagens ever, causing severe birth defects when taken by pregnant women.

About 2,000 of the victims who were born alive still live today. About half are in Germany and there are 458 in Britain.

"Because we were severely deformed they never expected us to live as long as we did," said Freddie

Asbury, 36, who was born without arms or legs, but with flipper-like hands.

"They certainly did not expect us to get on with life, get married, have children," added the Liverpoolian, who has a wife, a son and three stepchildren.

Mr. Asbury leads the Thalidomide action group, which is lobbying for continued compensation for the victims of the drug.

United Distillers, the original distributor of the drug in Britain, paid victims £33 million (\$50 million), which meant a lump sum of £20,000 to £30,000 each, the equivalent of £120,000 to £200,000 (\$180,000 to \$300,000) today.

Mr. Asbury says the settlement did not take into account an adult lifestyle. "It's still called the Thalidomide Children's Trust. That says it all," he says.

"Its aim was to make life easier for us. But I'm a qualified driver and I can't have a car adapted because it costs something like £9,000 (\$14,000)."

Brewery giant Guinness, which bought Distillers in 1986, said earlier this year it would donate £2.5 million (\$4 million) a year to the trust for the next 15 years.

Mr. Asbury's group says this will still not be enough for people who have children to support, mortgages to pay and who need specially adapted equipment and care.

There are other fears. As the "Thalidomide babies" approach middle age,

Thalidomide itself is undergoing a re-birth.

Pharmaceutical companies are finding it can work against a range of diseases from arthritis to AIDS and dozens are striving to have it re-licensed.

U.S.-based Celgene Corporation has won a patent for a way to make Thalidomide under the brand name Synovir. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has approved its use for AIDS patients suffering from severe wasting.

Celgene is also testing the drug for possible effects on rheumatoid arthritis, weight loss in cancer patients and other roles in fighting HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.

It is being tested for its effects on Alzheimer's disease, against graft-versus-host disease, a common complication of organ and bone marrow transplants, and multiple sclerosis.

Thalidomide has effects on immune system cells and seems to suppress inflammation. It has for years been a popular leprosy drug and is commonly prescribed to leprosy in Brazil.

This worries many doctors, who see it as too dangerous ever to be used widely again.

"Every year there are significant numbers of babies being born that are Thalidomide-affected simply because there is not information getting through," said Dr. Nigel Brown, an expert in birth defects for Britain's Medical Research Council.

Dr. Brown said he would argue against any attempt to license the drug in Britain. "It has such appalling consequences in pregnancy that one would want to be very, very careful. I would be reluctant to let it back on to the market. And so far, aside from its effect in leprosy, I don't think any of the new therapeutic uses are persuasive."

Dr. Brown said that, although theoretically doctors can limit access to dangerous drugs, in real life controls break down.

"The inclination, because they are extremely effective, is to pass them on to your friends," he said. "And once a drug becomes licensed in one country it very often becomes licensed in others."

Dr. William McBride, one of the first to speak out about the dangers of Thalidomide and who has been studying it ever since, disagreed.

"Provided people are given a thorough warning about the risk of pregnancy I have no problem with it," he said by telephone from Sydney, where he works at a charity he helped found.

"I think Thalidomide has been rediscovered — reborn, you might say."

Mr. Asbury is agnostic at such sentiments. "They don't know why the drug caused the deformities yet they are prepared to use it," he said. "They are a step away from another tragedy."

WEEKEND CROSSWORD

FANTASY ISLANDS
By Harvey Chew

ACROSS

1. Betty or Diana
2. Confession of faith
3. "Robbery"
4. Henry Ford's firm
5. French city
6. City on the Ganges
7. On the Ganges
8. Fleets
9. Reader's stand
10. Pagan's gold
11. Crowbar or pry
12. Good thing
13. Hollywood's
14. They're hunted
15. One of seven or nine
16. Descot
17. Dumpy type
18. Drip
19. Successor of the CIA
20. Surface under the big top
21. Bigger war
22. Cuckoo
23. Hawaiian
24. Greek city
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Israel quits Ramallah

(Continued from page 1)

with metal grates covering the front windshield as protection against stone throwing.

Under the Israel-PLO autonomy agreement, the 144 Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza remain in place during the five-year period of self-rule that ends in May 1999. The future of the settlements is to be negotiated in talks on the final status of the West Bank and Gaza that are to begin in May.

With Ramallah under PLO control, only the residents of Hebron, a city of 94,000, and about 40,000 Palestinians in a few scattered villages near Jerusalem will remain under

Israeli occupation, said Shlomo Dror, spokesman of the outgoing Israeli military government in the West Bank.

The 150,000 Palestinians living in East Jerusalem also remain under Israeli sovereignty, even though they have the right to vote in the Palestinian elections.

Mr. Dror said the hand-over of power has been relatively smooth, but that opponents to the peace agreement might try to sabotage it at the last minute with attacks on Israelis.

"We are now facing a very hard time. During the (Palestinian) election, we will have a period of tension. Those not participating (in the elections) will try to do something," Mr. Dror said.

Deputies complain of hikes

(Continued from page 1)

House's 80 lawmakers, have not received the attention of more than 50 deputies at best. On Wednesday, some of the bylaws' provisions were endorsed by 21 votes

out of only 41 deputies present. The minimum number of deputies needed to maintain quorum is 54 at the beginning of the session and 41 deputies afterwards.

The House will meet next Sunday to resume discussions of the House's draft bylaws.

Syria-Israel resume talks

(Continued from page 1)

site overlooking the east Wye River was chosen, Mr. Davies replied: "We thought the relative isolation will provide the kind of atmosphere that the delegates will require to make a little progress."

Israeli negotiators including Uri Savir, foreign ministry director-general, and Ambassador to Washington Itamar Rabinovich met on Tuesday with Dennis Ross, U.S. special Middle East envoy, to prepare for the talks. Another delegate is Yoel Singer, a legal adviser to the foreign ministry.

Mr. Ross also met members of the Syrian delegation, which comprises Ambassador to Washington Walid Al Muallem, Michael Wahbi, director of Foreign Ministry Farouq Al Sharaa's office, and Riad Daoudi, a legal adviser to the foreign ministry.

Syria said on Wednesday it wanted the talks with Israel to succeed and warned that failure would have negative impact on the future of the Middle East.

But a senior Syrian official said success of talks would require Israel to change its previous positions and to translate its positive statements about peace into practical steps.

"Syria wants the Maryland negotiations to succeed," he said. "A breakthrough in the Syrian-Israeli peace talks could be achieved very quickly if Israel clearly declares its readiness to withdraw fully from the Golan Heights."

"Israel should agree to establish a just and comprehensive peace which is based on U.N. resolutions. Failure of the talks would have negative impacts on the whole region," the official, who requested anonymity, said.

The Maryland talks were agreed following visits to Syria and Israel by U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher earlier this month.

Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres, who succeeded slain premier Yitzhak Rabin last month, has said he wanted to have speedy peace with Syria. Damascus responded positively.

Syria's chief negotiator

with Israel was quoted on Wednesday as saying his team had instructions from the Syrian leadership to be flexible in the peace talks, the first in six months.

"The delegation is coming to these talks with an open mind and clear instructions from the Syrian leadership to defend the fixed principles of our position and demonstrate flexibility in what does not endanger these principles and rights," Walid Al Muallem was quoted by the Lebanese daily As Saafir as saying.

Meanwhile, President Assad's spokesman Gebran Kuriyeh told Radio France International that raising the level of the talks would depend on the results of the current discussions.

"Everything has its time — and everything will depend on what will happen during the negotiations."

Israel has repeatedly called on Mr. Assad to raise the talks to ministerial level, or even agree to a summit meeting with Mr. Peres.

Mr. Kuriyeh said Mr. Peres, compared to Mr. Rabin, was "more open, talks of peace with a more intense desire and evokes more seriously the track of the negotiations with Syria."

"We can only welcome this change, but the negotiations will show to what degree they can be translated into a reality."

An Israeli minister security was still the main point at issue between the longtime foes.

Once that was resolved it would be easier to deal with other problems, Yossi Beilin, a cabinet minister in the Prime Minister's office, told Reuters.

Israel's satisfaction with security arrangements on the Golan Heights will affect its position on other aspects of a withdrawal from the plateau it captured from Syria in 1967.

But he said the talks were likely to focus first on procedure rather than substance.

"For us the most important issue on the Golan Heights is the security arrangements."

"Once we are satisfied with these arrangements I believe it will be easier to negotiate about all the other issues on our agenda."

The deal on the West Bank has left unfinished business, says Robert Fisk

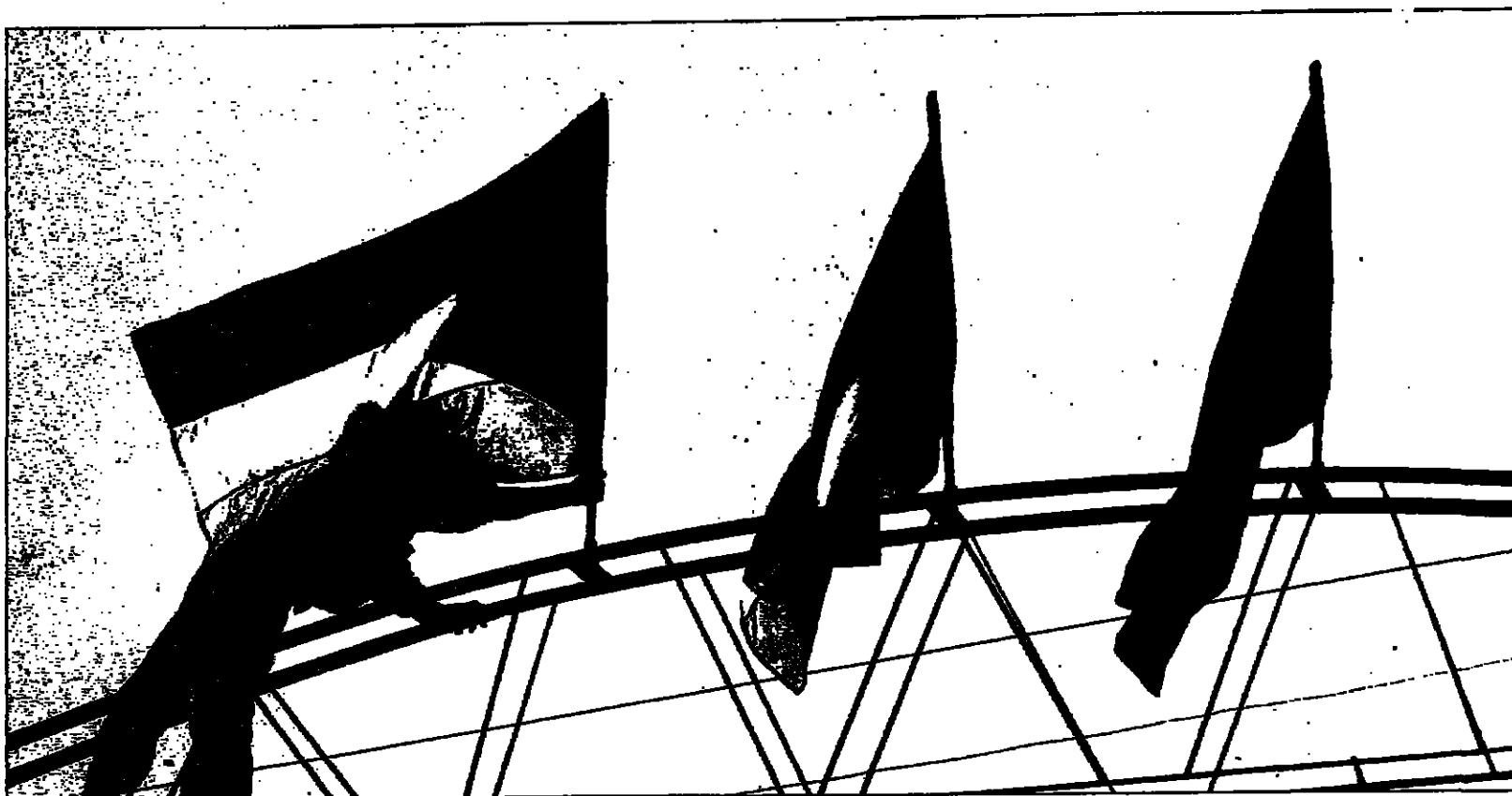
KIRYAT ARBA — The

new road for Jewish settlers ran like a black thread over the hills between Hebron and Jerusalem, new tarmac that glistened in the cold rain. But Naim of Gaza, for that is how he identified himself, not wanting to grace Israeli occupation with his family name, was not worried. "The road is for the settlers of Kiryat Arba but Arafat says it's only for five years," he said, his Israeli employer standing beside him, listening intently to our conversation. "Mr. Arafat says this is only for a transitional period. Of course I trust him."

But look, we said, look at the road, constructed on crushed stone, three inches of tarmac with new safety barriers and elegant road signs in Hebrew. This must cost millions; anyone who believes this is built for only five years must be financially insane or a liar. Here is a new highway linking the settlers of Kiryat Arba outside Hebron to the "eternal and unified capital of Israel" that will last 20 years or more. Naim of Gaza smiled. He trusted Mr. Arafat, he said. And his Israeli employer, huddling in his rain cape, nodded his agreement.

Well, maybe Naim of Gaza is right. After all, only half an hour earlier two Israeli tax-drivers outside the King David Hotel in Israeli West Jerusalem had pointedly refused to drive me to Arab East Jerusalem. So much, I thought at the time, for the "eternal and unified" capital of Israel. But those "settler roads" —

The PLO trail has many turnings



Palestinian flags are hoisted over Manger Square, in Bethlehem

to allow settlers on confiscated Arab land to drive to Jerusalem without contact with Palestinians — are snaking across the landscape of Yasser Arafat's "Palestine", bisecting and trisecting his land like a salami. Built, of course, by Palestinians such as Naim of Gaza.

And in the harder towns, such as Hebron, the reality of these roads that chop the West Bank into pieces means more than the honeyed words of Western diplomats and satellite television reporters. "We will have only cantons," Abdul Haj, a grocer of Hebron complained to me an hour later. "Arafat will be the mukhtar of the cantons."

You have to understand that he is not going to help us. He only seeks power and for this he will work for the Israelis. I remember what Golda Meir said to Sadat when he visited Jeru-

salem. She said that the government of any state should work for its people. And this is our problem because our Arab leaders don't work for their people — only for power. The Israelis work for their people. This is why the Israelis are strong and we are weak; which is why we must go back to Islam."

Across the windy hill behind Abdul Haj of Hebron, David of Kiryat Arba, immensely tall, 22 years old, a Jewish student at Shiloh waiting for an Eged bus, was more ambiguous, armed with the arguments that Arab guerrillas leaders used to deploy in front of Western journalists 15 years ago. "I think what Rabin did was wrong — but it was wrong that he should be killed. Because it is wrong for anyone to take the life of any other man."

I do not believe in this peace process. I will only

leave here in one way: In a coffin. I believe in the Bible. This land was given to us."

Like a tape cassette, David moved through the Biblical quotations. His parents had moved from Morocco to Kiryat Arba, believing that God had given Judea and Samaria to the Jews. He captured the very spirit of the old men of the Palestinian revolution whom I used to meet in Beirut in the late 1970s:

Commitment without imagination. Perhaps all fundamentalism should be defined in this way, the integrity of their quarrel undebated by doubt. But then up walked of Elit — and the anonymity of all family names in this report are at the specific request of their Arab and Jewish owners — who was an Arabic-speaking Israeli soldier of 20 on joint-Israeli-Palestinian patrols in the

West Bank.

"Whatever they tell you," he said — and here he nodded in David's direction — "we have no business in Bethlehem or Tul-karem or Shkheim (Nab-lus). We should be out of there. It's not our land."

But what about the settlers themselves, I asked? Was it their land? Many smiles here, but few words. "Look, I can't talk politics, just to say that we should give back their towns." And East Jerusalem? "Never." Eilan replied, all of which suggested that Abdul Haj and his predictions of "cantons" was too close to the mark.

In Bethlehem, on the eve of its "liberation" from Israeli troops, the Palestinians preferred to avoid the subject of Jerusalem. "It should be an international city," the tour guide insisted — no identity here, not even a Christian name

— "and the religious sites must be controlled by Christians, Muslims and Jews." I had heard this argument a thousand times. But the declaration of principles, the final status negotiations on Jerusalem — what was to become of them, I asked? And the guide, a thin, raincoated figure with an equally thin moustache, shrugged his shoulders. "This is not my business."

But of course, it is his business. At present he cannot even drive the few miles to Jerusalem, let alone call it his capital. To travel to Ramallah or Jericho from Bethlehem, there is a newly improved road — the Arafat trail — that swoops dangerously into wadis and across escarpments, providing West Bank Palestinians with just the merest glance of the spires of the city they cannot visit.

The Independent

Pyongyang keeps world guessing on war and peace

By Andrew Brown
Reuters

SEOUL — By turns snarling and conciliatory, unpredictable North Korea is again keeping the world guessing over whether it is making ready for war or suing for peace.

After scuttling inter-Korean detente by snatching a southern fishing trawler in May and killing two crew members, Pyongyang handed back the survivors on Wednesday in a show of comaraderie.

Yet its troops, tanks and warplanes are manoeuvring over ice-hardened terrain near the border, jangling nerves in Seoul and as far away as Tokyo and Washington.

But Pyongyang diplomats in New York this month agreed on details of an accord to reduce North Korea's potential nuclear menace widely seen as a threat to global peace.

North Korea's signals are

so confusing, and international trust towards it so frayed, that its cries for help to feed a population on the brink of famine have been largely ignored.

South Korean President Kim Young-Sam frets that political turmoil in Seoul may encourage military adventurism. He says Soviet-era MiG fighters are massing near the demilitarised zone that has divided the peninsula since the 1950-53 Korean war.

Western diplomats in Seoul generally agree that fears of an invasion from the North are overblown. "In the past, South Korean government have used the security threat as a political tool and they may be doing that again ahead of elections," said one Western diplomat.

"The problem is that both sides have raised their levels of military preparedness," he said. "Whether there's a real intent of a threat by North Korea is

hard to say."

U.S. Defence Secretary William Perry said this month regular North Korean winter military exercises this year, compared with the past 10 years, were "at the high end of that scale, but not off the scale."

Nevertheless, North Korea "continues to be high on our watch list," Mr. Perry told reporters. "Pyongyang-watchers in Seoul say a greater worry than invasion is that North Korea may attempt a high-profile military stunt, perhaps seizing a southern-held island, to divert internal attention from the food crisis."

In Tokyo, North Korea expert Noriyuki Suzuki said Pyongyang may feel threatened.

Summer floods have devastated the grain crop, raising the spectre of food riots and malnourished refugees flooding over the border to China in search

of food. The problem has added to political strains in Pyongyang.

Kim Jong-Il has still to inherit North Korea's top posts — the presidency and secretary generalship of the Korean Workers Party — following the death of his father, the "Great leader" Kim Il Sung.

"North Korea's suspicion against the South seems to have grown," said Mr. Suzuki. "They say to themselves, 'If I were South Korean leader I would use an attack against the North to turn attention away from South Korea's domestic political problems.'"

Two former South Korean presidents are in detention facing charges of mutiny and bribery as President Kim attempts to root out the corrupt legacy of military-backed rule and dispense justice to perpetrators of a 1980 army massacre.

"North Koreans, quite legitimately, see the United

States, Japan and South Korea closing the ring on them," Mr. Suzuki said.

That would appear to fly in the face of U.S. intentions last year when Washington signed an accord with Pyongyang to provide it with two light-water nuclear reactors in return for a pledge to scrap heavy-water reactors capable of making bomb-grade material.

The \$4.5 billion deal was part of a carrot-and-stick effort to draw Pyongyang out of its cold war era isolation with the promise of aid, investment and possibly diplomatic gains.

Washington got its nuclear agreement with Pyongyang is still waiting for food to feed its hungry people.

On Tuesday, South Korea's official media reported that officials from Washington, Seoul and Tokyo would meet in Hawaii next month to try to coordinate a Pyongyang strategy and decide

whether to offer food aid.

Senior Seoul officials, and public opinion, appear uncompromising. Betrayed once by North Korea, which seized the fishing boat after taking free rice from the south, the country is wary of being slapped in the face again.

Further rice aid is seen as dependent on a revival of inter-Korean dialogue.

On Wednesday, a unification ministry official told Reuters the handover of the fishermen did not change attitudes in Seoul. "We were waiting for an official offer from Pyongyang, but it never came. Pyongyang made the announcement and on their own made the handover," the official said.

"It's difficult to say that Pyongyang is changing its attitude with the return. It seems to still want nothing to do with the South Korean government but do a show for the outside world," he added.

Mediation efforts

(Continued from page 1)

of the mouth of the Red Sea, and whose status has never been defined by international conventions.

Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh has called on Eritrea to remove its forces from Hanish Al Kabir before bilateral negotiations on the island's future can begin.

Eritrea has called for both sides to withdraw their troops from the region before taking the issue to arbitration at the International Court of Justice in The Hague.

The head of the Organisation for African Unity (OAU) was expected in Asmara on Wednesday for talks aimed at resolving the conflict.

Salim Ahmad Salim, the OAU secretary general, was due to meet Mr. Afeworki and Foreign Minister Petros Solomon, Eritrean presidential chief of staff Yemene Ghebre Meskel told AFP.

However, Meskel said the talks might not bring immediate success because Yemen, which is backed by the Arab league, could cast doubt on the OAU's impartiality.

"Our soldiers and theirs were together, on both sides

of the island, for several weeks. It could have remained like that during the time necessary to solve the problem, but they decided to attack," Mr. Meskel said.

"If they refuse the international arbitration we propose, I suspect it's because they have no confidence in their legal claim," he added.

"Why fear if you have solid evidence?"

Yemen, meanwhile is placing its faith in the efforts of other countries to mediate in its dispute with Eritrea over three strategic Red Sea islands, a Sudanese newspaper citing a Yemeni envoy said Wednesday.

Abdul Alam Al Anasi told the daily Akhbar Al Youm that Yemen felt it was premature to call a meeting of the Arab League to discuss the dispute over the Hanish archipelago.

He said his country preferred to give a full chance to Ethiopia, Egypt and the United States to mediate in the dispute.

"We are seeking a peaceful settlement to the dispute with Eritrea," Mr. Anasi told reporters after meeting Sudanese President Omar Al

Arctic enlargement highlights need for EU reform

By Fredrik Dahl
Reuters

BRUSSELS — The entry of Sweden, Finland and Austria into the European Union (EU) a year ago has strengthened those in the 15-nation bloc who want further enlargement, freer trade and markets, a greener continent and less secrecy.

But it has left some in the new countries wondering whether they made the right choice to join the EU on Jan. 1, 1995.

A year after the arrival of the newcomers, diplomats and officials in Brussels say the EU's expansion north to the Arctic and east to the Russian border has been fairly smooth, if not entirely without problems.

They are, some diplomats say, less keen on further European integration than some of the old guard.

They have also underlined the need for the EU

to change its internal procedures during 1996's treaty review, called to prepare the bloc for enlargement into Eastern Europe.

Already, the expansion to 15 from 12 members has affected efficiency.

"What we still have of course is a machine designed for six members, it has basically not changed, and now suddenly we have 15 and whatever new member would make it more difficult to come to a decision," one EU diplomat said.

The membership of Sweden, Austria and Finland boosted the EU's territory by a third, its population by 6.2 per cent to 370 million and its gross domestic product by seven per cent.

The new members — all relatively rich — are seen as environmentally advanced, boosting hopes of stronger EU action to clear up Europe.

Sweden and Finland are

also promoting efforts to make the bloc's decision-making process more open to the public, arguing this is necessary to bring the union closer to ordinary people.

"That the three have joined has strengthened the group which has long pursued a policy in favour of more competition, increased openness and deregulation," said a Swedish diplomat.

The newcomers have not yet, however, radically changed the EU.

"It is like jumping on board a supertanker... You cannot change things from one day to the other," one EU official said.

This enlargement has been "far less difficult" than when Spain and Portugal joined the then European Community in 1986 and when Greece became a member in 1981, another diplomat said.

"The three new members are politically and econo-

mically... (of) the same standard as the most developed in the union," he said.

Others were less positive, suggesting the newcomers lacked enthusiasm for further European integration.

"For the three countries it is not a question of the union first and foremost. It is one of the union when it meets their interests," one diplomat said.

As for operating within the EU, it is Finland that gets the highest marks from diplomats.

"They are very purposeful, they know where they want to be, they want to be at the centre. They will take us all by surprise," said an official at the European Commission.

He was less positive about neighbouring Sweden. "They sit up there on their peninsula and they look down and they wonder what... is going on and their emotional instinct is

to keep away from that," he said.

Austria's performance during the first year has been affected by its own political turmoil, another diplomat said.

"They have been paralysed by their internal problems, they have had to avoid all sensitive issues," he added.

Of the three, Sweden has made clear it will not shy away from confronting old and more powerful EU members, for example, by sharply criticising French nuclear tests.

"We sometimes have the feeling that you can see, feel and hear that this is a country with hundreds of years without occupation, without real outside threat," one diplomat said.

Unlike Sweden, Finland has traditionally kept a low profile in foreign policy issues. "When we are against for instance nuclear testing, we have said it, but we have tried to avoid

conflict," Foreign Minister Tarja Halonen told Reuters.

Despite the fact that the three seem to be adjusting without great difficulties to life in Brussels, their own citizens have become more negative about the union.

According to a survey published in November by the European Commission, Swedes, Austrians and Finns are all more sceptical about the EU than people in the bloc as a whole.

In Sweden no fewer than 62 per cent said their country had not benefited from membership, but a Swedish diplomat in Brussels said the opposition had not yet affected the country's EU policies.

Firms, cashing in on an 11 per cent drop in food prices since the country joined, seem to be more comfortable in the EU.

"The first year of membership has lived up to our expectations," President Martti Ahtisaari said.

Arab oil supplies likely to rise slightly in 1996

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Arab oil supplies will likely increase by only 300,000 barrels per day (b/d) in 1996 although world demand will jump by more than one million b/d and the region controls over 60 per cent of the global crude reserves, according to an official report.

Saudi Arabia, the world's main crude supplier, and its fellow members in the Arab League pumped around 20.1 million b/d in 1995 and the level is projected to rise to 20.4 million b/d in 1996, the Organisation of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) said in its December bulletin.

Arab oil output will peak at 20.6 million b/d in the fourth quarter of 1996, when seasonal demand reaches one of its highest levels in the year.

World oil supplies are set to increase to 71.3 million b/d in 1996 from around 70 million b/d in 1995, the Kuwait-based OAPEC said.

Supplies of oil and gas liquids by the 12-nation Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), which include several Arab producers, will also rise modestly to 27.8 million b/d from 27.7 million b/d in the same period.

Most of the increase in global demand over the past two years has been met by North Sea producers Britain and Norway, and other non-OPEC countries. They will also account for the bulk of the increase in 1996.

OAPEC said its 10 members accounted for only 100,000 b/d of the growth in demand in the third quarter of 1995, when world consumption largely grew.

"Indications do not point to any increase in supplies by OPEC countries during the fourth quarter because of the output increases in other producers and withdrawal from stockpiles," the bulletin said. It said OPEC's decision to roll over its official output ceiling of 24.52 million b/d for the first half of 1996 and compliance with production quotas would prop up crude prices, which averaged \$17 until September.

Egyptian inflation falls to 30-year low

CAIRO (R) — Egyptian inflation fell to 4.9 per cent in the year to the end of November, from 7.0 per cent at the end of October and 11.4 per cent in November 1994, the Statistics Department of the Cabinet Office said Wednesday.

Prime Minister Ataf Sedki told government newspapers that the November inflation rate was the lowest in 30 years.

Fighting inflation has been a central feature of the economic reform programme the Egyptian government launched in 1991 but until recently the results had been mixed.

Inflation, based on the consumer price index for urban areas, rose to a post-reform high of 26.1 per cent in January 1992 and for the first 10 months of this year it ranged between 10.2 per cent in February and 7.0 per cent in October.

The cabinet's Information and Decision Support Centre gave the November figure but did not provide a detailed breakdown.

Government newspapers quoted Dr. Sedki as saying the new figure was well below target and gave the government scope to increase spending and investment.

The main factor bringing inflation down has been strict control over the government's budget deficit, which fell to between 1.3 and 1.7 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) in the July-September quarter of the 1995/96 fiscal year.

The government is committed to keeping the deficit to 1.6 per cent of GDP for the whole of the current year, which runs from July 1, Economy Minister Mahmoud Mohammad Mahmoud said.

In theory, the low inflation figure should enable the government to bring down interest rates, which range from about 9.5 per cent upwards. Treasury bills yield about 10.5 per cent and the central bank discount rate stands at 13.5 per cent.

But bankers say a fall in interest rates could rapidly erode the value of the Egyptian pound, which has hardly changed against the U.S. dollar for almost four years, despite the large inflation differential between the two currencies.

When talks between Egypt and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) resume next month, cutting domestic interest rates is expected to be high on the agenda.

OECD: Italian interest rates set to fall in '96

PARIS (R) — Italian interest rates are set to fall in early 1996 and narrow the gap with German rates by the end of 1997, the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has said.

"With the fiscal outlook improving and disinflation resuming, interest rates are expected to ease from the first half of 1996," the Paris-based group of developed nations said in its semi-annual report. OECD forecasts for Italy into 1996 and 1997 predicted inflationary pressure would ease, while economic growth should continue, albeit at a slower overall rate for 1996 and 1997.

"The long-term differential vis-a-vis Germany being assumed in the projections is to narrow to four percentage points by the end of 1997," the report added.

The gap between German and Italian long-term rates, as measured by the yield on government long-term bonds, slipped to 54 percentage points in November

from 44 points at the end of September due to political uncertainty in Italy.

The group predicted the long-term interest rate on the 10-year Italian treasury bond (BTP) will fall to 10.8 per cent in 1996 and 10.4 per cent in 1997, from 11.8 per cent in 1995.

The gap between Italian and German discount rates widened earlier this month as the Bundesbank cut half a percentage point off its discount rate to three per cent while the Bank of Italy's discount rate has held steady at nine per cent since May 1995.

The report concluded that for 1996, its own projections were broadly in line with Italian budget proposals. But it said the main risks to its projections concerned fiscal policy, the lira exchange rate and interest rates.

"Any failure to keep budget deficit reduction on track could result in downward pressure on the lira, rekindling inflation expectations," the OECD concluded.

Japan's jobless rate marches on to new record high

TOKYO (R) — Japan's official jobless rate hit a record high, kindling fears that higher levels of unemployment may be becoming entrenched within society.

The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate jumped to 3.4 per cent in November, up from 3.2 per cent in October, a level it had previously maintained for five successive months, the government's Management and Coordination Agency said.

"The employment situation is unlikely to improve in the short-term," an agency official said.

The figure rose from 2.9 per cent a year earlier and is the highest since the government began collecting statistics under its present methods in 1953.

The climb surprised analysts, who had expected the rate to remain steady at 3.2 per cent, and was certain to compound a growing sense of insecurity in a workforce traditionally associated with the principle of lifetime employment.

The government's chief economic planner, Isamu Miyazaki, already admitted in mid-November that real unemployment was more likely to be between five and six per cent, much higher than the official rate. Official statistics do not include those who have given up looking for a job and people who remain on company payrolls even when there is no work for them to do.

But the agency said it was too early to judge if the rise in November really represented a trend towards high unemployment levels like those seen in Europe. Unemployment is estimated at 10.6 per cent in the European Union.

Certainly the news was not all bleak. Labour ministry data measuring the ratio of jobs to applicants showed an increase to 0.63, up from 0.61 a month earlier.

This meant there were 63 job offers for each 100 applicants in November. The ministry said job offers had increased mainly in the ser-

vice sector, rising by 7.4 per cent from a month earlier.

The agency said unemployment had risen mostly among young people, but this was partly because a greater number of them, encouraged by signs that the economy is improving, were quitting their jobs to find better work.

"There have been some signs that the economy is getting better and some people may see this as an opportunity to look for new work. This phenomenon seems to be particularly strong among young men," an agency official said.

The unemployment rate among young people between 15 and 24 years old rose to 6.0 per cent from 4.8 per cent from a year earlier.

Labour ministry data released earlier this month showed that the number of people seeking to change their jobs during the first half-year period rose for the first time in four years. It rose to 4.3 per cent, up by 0.3 per cent from the same period a year earlier.

The official also said some people who had given up finding work had begun to search again. They would be registering as unemployed, contributing to the overall jobless rate.

The overall unemployment rate for men also hit its highest level since 1953, climbing 0.2 percentage points to 3.4 per cent from a month earlier. The unemployment rate for women remained unchanged from the previous month at 3.3 per cent.

Meanwhile, Japan appears headed for a gradual recovery over the two years from its longest post-war slowdown, with business investment leading a progressive acceleration of domestic demand, the OECD has said.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) said economic activity stalled in the first half of 1995 as a result of the yen's rise against the dollar, and to a lesser extent, the Kobe earthquake.

Because of the economy's weakness, falling asset prices

and the fragility of the banking system, the immediate policy priority of Japanese authorities in the past year was to avert the risk of a "deflation-recession spiral," it said.

The Bank of Japan's continued easing of monetary policy and the government's new massive fiscal stimulus package, announced last September, combined with the reversal of the yen's appreciation "can be expected to revive the economy," the OECD said in its year-end Economic Outlook.

Based on these developments, implying increased domestic liquidity and lower financing costs for enterprises as well as an upturn in stock market prices, it projected growth of about 2.0 per cent next year, rising to 2.7 per cent in line with the OECD average in 1997.

The OECD noted that the September package came too late to have much effect on Japan's 1995 performance, with barely positive growth of about 0.25 per cent.

The report reiterated the OECD's warning earlier this month that Japan could face a renewed setback if the yen were to firm up significantly against the U.S. dollar once again.

"On the other hand," it said, "a continuation of the orderly reversal of the yen's (first-half) appreciation could significantly improve the outlook."

A scenario worked out by OECD economists showed that if the yen were allowed to depreciate to a rate of 115 to the dollar, some 10 per cent down from the rate of 103.7 yen on which the OECD projections were based, Japan could achieve 2.8 per cent growth next year, rising to 4.2 per cent in 1997.

The OECD said the September fiscal package, besides helping to buoy up business confidence, should ensure a recovery of public investment from the end of this year into 1996.

Household spending should in turn rise and the savings stabilise as consumers "regain confidence and overcome current fears about job prospects."

But the OECD said a sustained sharp rise in imports, encouraged by deregulation, would continue to put pressure on jobs in labour-intensive manufacturing.

Domestic producers "may capture less than two-thirds" of the projected overall increase in demand, keeping GDP growth below the upturn in demand over the coming two years.

The OECD consequently saw a jobless rate of 3.4 per cent next year and in 1997, up from this year's 3.2 per cent and 2.9 per cent in 1994.

Japan's current account surplus should meanwhile decline to around \$93 billion next year, stabilising at about \$95 billion in 1997, from an estimated \$112 billion this year and \$130 billion in 1993-94.

This would amount to an average of 2.0 per cent of GDP over the next two calendar years, a full point down from 3.1 per cent in 1993.

The OECD said downward pressure on prices in Japan was likely to continue next year with inflation declining by a further 0.4 per cent after this year's 0.9 drop in prices. But it said consumer prices were set to start rising again by 1997, with a planned increase in the consumption tax rate.

Besides the exchange rate factor, the OECD saw uncertainty in the period immediately ahead about the strength of the recovery.

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR THURSDAY, DECEMBER 28, 1995

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Study your goals in the morning today, and you will know how to gain them by a more direct approach, so don't waste time foolishly.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Postpone that business affair until you have first realised some personal goal which is important to you and then you can proceed on some project.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Steer clear of that overly talkative partner and get much accomplished in the world of activity so you become more prosperous.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Don't get so bogged down by your duties which you cannot see the opportunities around you for greater advancement.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Keep occupied at this time with business matters of importance and forget pleasure until later this evening for you to be successful.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Maintain harmony at home even though tempted to disagree, and then later today, talk over with a fellow associate how to improve joint interests.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Keep rooted to your career activities and gain benefit instead of running around hither and yon. In the morning today, be careful in driving on the highway.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Don't commit yourself financially in the morning today, and later this evening you know how to push your finest talents.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Your ideas may not be good in the morning today, but you can profit from those of loved ones the rest of the day and later this evening.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) A private concern could easily keep you from accomplishing much in the outside world at this time, if you permit it to occupy your time.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) A close friend could give advice which would get you into difficulty, so forget it and work on practical affairs which need your attention.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Postpone settling that upsetting problem in the morning today and do whatever pleases you most to get the desires which you want.

Birthstone of December: Turquoise — Zircon

FORECAST FOR FRIDAY, DECEMBER 29, 1995

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Do some tall thinking before you commence on that new course of action which has you excited about a new project in the works.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) You have to study that difficulty you have from a new angle if you are to resolve it properly and with great success on your part.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Remove the stumbling blocks from the path of your progress at this time and then full speed ahead. Tonight is fine for romance with your mate.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Do not get into any disagreement in the business world or there can be serious repercussions which could be disastrous.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Be more observant and will you know how to uncover the outlets best suited to your talents and capabilities you possess.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Keep promises made in the morning today, and then be off to more interesting enterprises which are more profitable to you.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Don't let a dynamic fellow associate disturb you during the daytime today, but later in the evening, your mate can be most solicitous.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) You may feel you are not getting ahead at your career activities, but don't make this evident to your superior. Be kind with fellow associates.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Plans for amusements are not working out just right at this time, but later you can enjoy other activities tremendously with close friends.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Get an early start at your career activities and accomplish a great deal, then you can be off to recreational activities with your loved ones.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Keep your attention focused on your home today and forget about shopping and spending money foolishly on something you do not need.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) This is not a good day today to commit yourself monetarily in any big matters. An expert could be stingy with important information about some new project.

Birthstone of December: Turquoise — Zircon

Jordan Times
Tel: 684311/
699634

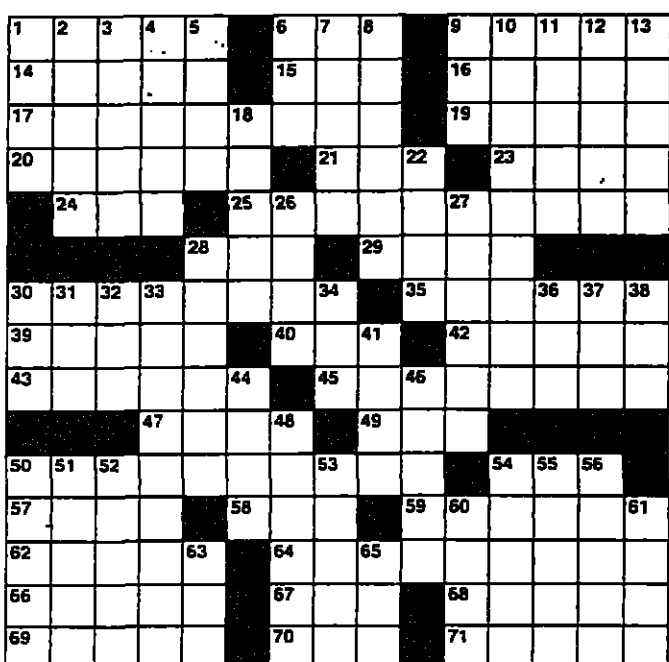
THE Daily Crossword by Lee G. Barrow

ACROSS

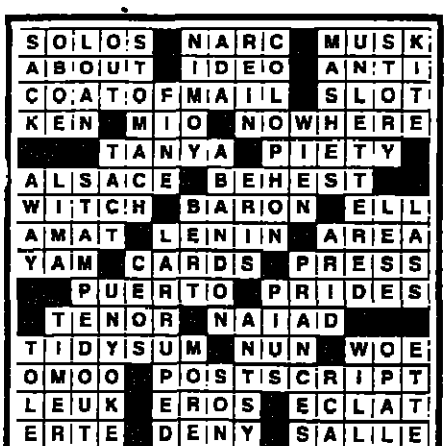
- 1 Seasons
- 6 Elec. unit
- 9 "This is —"
- 14 Ice cream unit?
- 15 Deface
- 16 City on the Columbia
- 17 Gemstone
- 19 Above
- 20 High — (tense)
- 21 Mao — Jung
- 23 Greek letter
- 24 Inspect
- 25 Gemstone
- 28 Sun Yat —
- 29 Coat or key start
- 30 Begins
- 35 Heron cousins
- 39 Limits or space beginning
- 40 Drunkard
- 42 "— of Two Cities"
- 43 Required
- 45 Pertaining to speech sound
- 47 Gemstone
- 49 Pub quaff
- 50 Gemstone
- 54 Feminine suffix
- 57 Sisters
- 58 Itch
- 59 Treat with a certain halogen
- 62 Convulsive breaths
- 64 Gemstone
- 66 Trapshooting
- 67 Old alliance letters
- 68 Andean animal
- 69 Pile fabric
- 70 Musical piece: abbr.
- 71 Indian state

DOWN

- 1 Some planes
- 2 Sharp
- 3 British truck
- 4 Close-fitting hat
- 5 Gyrate
- 6 French friend
- 7 Spars

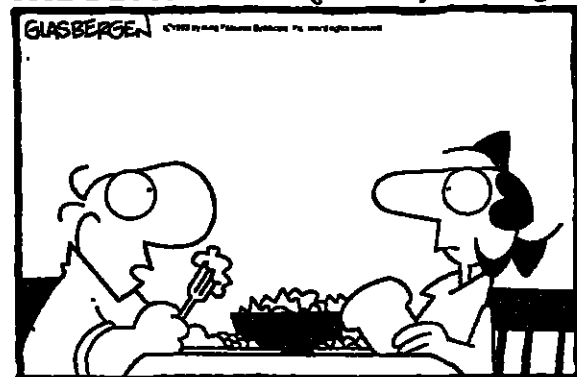


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- 8 Already placed
- 9 Military address letters
- 10 Gemstone
- 11 Chemical compound
- 12 TV actor. Bao
- 13 Gemstone
- 18 Monsters
- 22 Distant or lateral lead-in
- 26 Burden
- 27 Elegant
- 28 Flow
- 30 Family member
- 31 Cal. abbr.
- 32 Dined
- 33 Gemstones
- 34 Burst
- 36 Perched
- 37 Samuel's teacher
- 38 Dry, as wine
- 41 Comparative word
- 44 Notable date
- 46 Derived from oil
- 48 Netherworld region
- 50 Apprehension
- 51 Tremble
- 52 Racer Bobby or Al
- 53 Dental filling
- 54 Images
- 55 Nursemaids
- 56 Linguistic sources
- 60 A stale: abbr.
- 61 Test
- 63 Pig place
- 65 Branch

THE BETTER HALF By Glasbergen



"To celebrate the holidays, my boss took us all out to lunch. Actually, he sat on a park bench and threw us bread crumbs."

Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



Bus
IDB
third
JUD
GIFT
MON
FOR

IDB lends JD 4.1m in third quarter of '95

By Abdul Salam Gharabeh
Special to the Jordan Times
AMMAN — The Industrial Development Bank (IDB) said Sunday that it has granted Jordanian businesses 34 loans totalling JD 4.098 million in the third quarter of 1995 to help finance industrial, tourist and services projects. The lion's share (29 projects worth JD 3.08 million) went to the industrial sector.

The statement indicated that some of the loans helped to finance craftsmen businesses, medical labor-

atories, dry clean services, leather tanning and jewelry.

It said that the loans for tourist projects financed the construction of hotels and restaurants.

The statement noted the total capital invested in these projects amounted to JD 10.8 million creating 346 jobs.

Since the beginning of 1995, the IDB has granted a total of 101 loans worth JD 14.7 million compared to 112 loans worth JD 26.1 million during the same period of 1994.

Investors are setting up Mining Investments Company

AMMAN (Petra) — A number of major investors, companies and economists are currently establishing a holding company which in turn will make investments in the mining industry of the Kingdom, according to an announcement Wednesday by Sameh Madani, chairman of the company's founding board.

Mr. Madani said that the holding company, known by the name of Mining Investment Company (MIC) will be involved in mining the huge

mineral resources abounding in the country, according to the latest estimates and geological studies.

The holding company, Mr. Madani said, will operate on a commercial basis and will conduct feasibility studies, create splinter firms each specializing in a certain field with the purpose of sufficing the needs of the local industrial markets and exporting the surplus.

Noting that Jordan's total revenues from the mining industries in Jordan reached JD 512 million in 1994 of which JD 316 million came from exports, Mr. Madani said that markets in the Arab World and other countries in the region are very likely to purchase Jordanian mineral

products.

He said initial studies showed that industrial rocks found in Jordan could be easily marketed in foreign countries provided they have been treated to cater to world specifications and standards.

Referring to the kinds of mineral ores found in the Kingdom in great quantities, Mr. Madani said that these are normally used in the manufacture of glass, ceramics, plastics and artificial rubber as well as components in the manufacture of paints and detergents and the treatment of waste water. They are also used in the production of fertilisers, pesticides, and in agricultural and engineering fields.

Noting Jordan's import-

ance in the mining industries, Mr. Madani said that Jordan comes second to Morocco in this field and continues to produce cement, and potash which are used in the fertilisers industry.

He said that the holding company has based its decision on embarking on these investments after scrutinising reports provided by the Natural Resources Authority which had conducted laboratory tests and conducted geological surveys in different areas of Jordan on artificial rocks and minerals.

He added that the MIC will be a public shareholding company backed and encouraged by the Jordanian government.

U.S. telecom reform seen triggering merger frenzy

NEW YORK (R) — Telecommunications companies are circling each other, waiting for new legislation to unleash what could be the biggest merger and deal-making frenzy ever seen in the \$100 billion industry.

Industry executives say companies are hungry to expand, but they are also fearful of being taken over. Regional Bells, eyeing a long distance market previously denied to them under U.S. antitrust rules, are likely to be most aggressive.

"I think you will see a lot of people combining very

quickly once legislation passes," said one industry source.

Each company wants to offer a full set of services to their customers, from wireless communications to cable TV and everything else in between.

The Baby Bells were long limited in their ambitions since the rules governing the 1984 break-up of the old Bell system prevented them from entering the long distance market and kept ATT Corp. out of local calling as well.

That could all change with reform. Five years after leg-

islation unifies the markets, few will remember the difference between local and long distance telephone companies, executives predict.

NYNEX Corp. and Bell Atlantic Corp., long rumored candidates for fusion, already hunt as a pair. They co-own a fast-growing mobile phone venture, and with another Bell, Pacific Telesis Group, share control of an interactive television venture called TeleTV.

The two companies declined to comment on a Wall Street Journal report that they were considering a full merger, but acknowledge the logic in such stories.

"We have contiguous regions, and there are natural synergies, but it's a big leap after that saying which way things will go," said an executive at one of the two Bells.

Nobody expects any deals to be signed before the reform legislation, currently being finalised by joint subcommittees in Congress, is passed into law. That is expected by March 1996.

Analysts say that while there is nothing to rule out regional Bells merging before then, every dot and comma of the bill could change the valuations of businesses involved.

Bell Atlantic's planned \$30 billion merger with cable TV firm Telecommunications INC. in 1993 was torpedoed by valuation uncertainties in part caused by regulation of the cable TV industry.

LONDON EXCHANGE RATES

LONDON (R) — Following are the buying and selling rates for leading world currencies and gold against the dollar on the London foreign exchange and bullion markets Wednesday.

One U.S. dollar	1.3616/26	Canadian dollar	1.0243/53
	1.4316/26	Deutsche mark	1.6028/38
	1.6028/38	Dutch guilders	1.5400/10
	1.5400/10	Swiss francs	29.39/43
	29.39/43	Belgian francs	4.9065/15
	4.9065/15	French francs	158.51/6.6
	158.51/6.6	Italian lire	102.43/53
	102.43/53	Japanese yen	6.6230/30
	6.6230/30	Swedish crowns	6.3160/10
	6.3160/10	Norwegian crowns	5.5410/10
	5.5410/10	Danish crowns	1.4145/55
	1.4145/55	Singapore dollars	0.7429/34
	0.7429/34	Australian dollars	7.7335/45
	7.7335/45	Hong Kong dollars	

One sterling \$1.5528/38
One ounce of gold \$387.40/387.70

DAILY BUSINESS BEAT

A review of news from the Arabic press

Deputies fail to obtain promises from minister on salary increases

★ THE FINANCIAL Committee of the Lower House has insisted on fixing a date for awarding salary increases to civil servants and military personnel but could not obtain a clear-cut promise on this matter from the minister of finance. The committee did not succeed to take a pledge from the minister on raising the amount of the salary increase from JD 10 to JD 20 and on advancing the date for its payment from May 1996 to the beginning of next year. The committee, which has completed its draft report on the 1996 budget, pointed out that salary increases given in recent years to civil servants and military personnel did not improve their living standards and were not enough to counter rises in prices.

Among several proposals put before the committee to protect employees from high prices was linking salary increases with the cost of living index whereby if prices rise by five per cent, the salary increase would be five per cent and so on. Another proposal was to find a mechanism to control prices and, as such, it would be more beneficial than giving direct salary increases. Finally, the committee criticised the bloated administration at government institutions and the reflection of that in terms of inefficiency (Al Dustour).

World Bank agrees to finance study on setting up agricultural marketing company

★ THE WORLD Bank has agreed to finance a study to establish a company for marketing fresh vegetables and fruits. The financing would be in the form of a grant. According to an official at the Ministry of Planning, the idea for setting up such a company emerged to support the farmer and to try to overcome marketing bottlenecks which happen sometimes and result in financial losses to the farmer. The company, he explained, would look for new international markets in eastern and western Europe to supply them with agricultural products. The export procedures would depend on quality, good grading and packaging, to be able to compete in these markets, the official said. He added that once the company is set up, it will be possible to sign contracts with farmers in advance to deliver their produce at prices that would put an end to their losses (Al Dustour).

Society wants additional water consumption without higher charges

★ THE NATIONAL Society for Consumer Protection has demanded that the category not to be affected by the higher water charges be widened to include all those households consuming up to 75 cubic metres instead of 40 cubic metres per quarter. In a letter to the prime minister, the society said water consumption in Jordan was among the lowest in the world and an amount of 40 cubic metres per quarter was not enough and meant unhygienic conditions. The letter said that after studies, the society found out that 75 cubic metres were the minimum amount needed to attain the minimum hygiene level. The minister of water and irrigation said recently that 330,000 subscribers out of 500,000 subscribers, would not be affected by higher water charges as they consume less than 40 cubic metres every quarter (Al Ra'i).

Financial Markets

Currency	New York Close	Tel Aviv Close
Sterling Pound	1.5600	1.5500**
Deutsche Mark	1.4305	1.4203**
Swiss Franc	1.3540	1.3455**
French Franc	4.9045	4.9000**
Japanese Yen	102.33	102.55**
European Currency Unit	1.2815	1.2825**

Currency	1 MTH	3 MTH	6 MTH	12 MTH
U.S. Dollar	5.50	5.37	5.37	5.16
Sterling Pound	6.26	6.18	6.18	6.11
Deutsche Mark	8.31	8.02	8.43	8.37
Swiss Franc	1.93	1.84	1.82	1.80
French Franc	4.62	4.75	4.75	4.75
Japanese Yen	0.13	0.13	0.15	0.02
European Currency Unit	5.19	5.09	5.05	5.00

Metal	USD/Gm	JD/Gm	Metal	USD/Gm	JD/Gm
Gold	367.80	7.70	Silver	5.15	0.100

Currency	Bid	Offer
U.S. Dollar	0.7030	0.7100
Sterling Pound	1.0001	1.0050
Deutsche Mark	2.4938	2.4965
Swiss Franc	0.6123	0.6150
French Franc	0.1441	0.1448
Japanese Yen	0.0085	0.0090
Dutch Guilder	0.4413	0.4435
Swedish Krona	0.0427	0.0449
Italian Lira	0.0427	0.0449
Belgian Franc	0.0427	0.0449

Currency	Bid	Offer
Bahraini Dinar	1.5600	1.6750
Lebanese Lira	0.04535	0.04445
Saudi Riyal	0.1870	0.1898
Kuwaiti Dinar	2.3070	2.3070
Qatari Riyal	0.1235	0.1245
Egyptian Pound	0.2100	0.2200
Omani Riyal	1.8320	1.8110
Liban Dirham	0.1922	0.1935
Greek Drachma	0.2355	0.3105
Cypriot Pound	1.5224	1.5870

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Mother nature robs Tomba

PARIS (AFP) — Snow, or rather the lack of it, turned the 1995 World Cup ski season into a lottery and robbed Alberto Tomba of the one title that has so far escaped him — a world championship.

Mother nature's decision to let the sun shine and delay the snow meant the first 11 resorts in Europe listed to host events were unable to keep their schedules.

Things did not get much better and for the first time in years the world championships in Sierre Nevada in Spain had to be called off and rescheduled for January, 1996.

The one good result of the cancellation was that Tomba, who is determined to win a world championship before he retires, announced he would run again in the 1996 season to fulfill his final ambition.

Good news for skiing if not for the rest of the men in the slalom events.

The burly Tomba is so far ahead of the rest of the field that only an injury could slow him up enough to give anyone a chance to catch him.

The 1995 season saw him take everything in sight and with it his first ever overall World Cup title.

For the women, Switzerland's Vreni Schneider showed she had lost none of her competitiveness by winning her third overall title.

But it was the 24-year-old Picabo Street who won the headlines and the glory by winning five straight downhill titles. It was a stunning performance in an event that Tomba will not even risk.

But if Street was unbeatable, her male teammate AJ Kitt was going through a season, and a career, that had all the hallmarks of being scripted for a series of "Outer Limits".

Kitt collected his first downhill at Val d'Isere in 1991 but since then had bad luck and political infighting has stalled the 27-year-old's efforts to repeat his winning performance.

Twice in 1992 Kitt was leading when bad weather forced the races to be cancelled half-way through.

In 1995 disaster struck again when Kitt led in Aspen



Italian Alberto Tomba jubilates on finish line after winning the men's slalom World Cup in Madonna di Campiglio earlier this year (Reuters photo)

only for the race to be halted after 31 of the 68 races had completed the course.

Despite the decision the race jury decided to give Kitt the victory but both the French and Canadian teams promptly lodged a protest — the French because they wanted to help Luc Alphand take the downhill title.

The International Ski Federation (FIS) folded and stripped Kitt of his win.

early by knee injuries.

In a bid to make skiing more appealing to television audiences the FIS decided to change the rules for the 1995-96 season and run the top 30 in the slalom events in reverse order rather than the top 15 as previously.

The race jury, however, could go back to the old format if the piste was not up to it.

Option or not, Tomba was

SKIING REVIEW

Alphand, who had never managed a World Cup downhill win, made the most of the American's misfortune by doing the double at Kitzbuehl. Victory at Bormio gave the likeable 30-year-old the title.

The poor weather and the political infighting had one World Cup official describing the season as disastrous.

Austria's Anita Wachter and American Tommy Roe would be the first to agree. Their seasons were ended

unimpressed and boycotted the first race of the new season.

The 29-year-old calmed down enough to let his skis do the talking and by Christmas was leading the slalom table.

Wachter had also made a full recovery and prepared for the New Year by moving to second place in the overall standings.

Even Mother Nature had got her act together and 1995 was just a bad memory.

Bellmare win Asian Cup Winners Cup

YOKOHAMA (AFP) — A late goal by Hidetoshi Nakata gave Japan's Bellmare Hiratsuka a 2-1 win over Talaba of Iraq in the final of the Asian Cup Winners here Wednesday.

Bellmare won the cup for the first time, but it kept a Japanese stronghold on the title. Yokohama Marinos have won it twice and Yokohama Flugels, who were beaten in Monday's semi-final, won last year.

But Bellmare had to fight hard on a cold and windy night at the Mitsuzawa stadium against the fast moving Iraqi visitors.

Emerson, the brilliant Brazilian who scored all four goals in the 4-3 defeat of the Fingels on Monday, narrowly missed with a close range shot in the 21st minute.

But Bellmare defender Akira Nishizaki shot his side ahead six minutes later after being set free in the area by a Bentinho pass.

Talaba, five-time winners of the Iraqi Cup, made a sensational start to the second half when Ali Al Senayn broke through and passed to Sabah Khalaf, who fired an equalizer in the 51st minute.

Emerson repeatedly missed chances to put Bellmare ahead again. He hit the post in the 62nd minute and sent another shot over the bar in the 73rd.

But Nakata secured the Cup with an 81st minute winner.

He took a pass from substitute Yasuharu Sorimachi, quickly turned and beat Rahim Hussein and then shot past Talaba goalkeeper Omar Tahfeek.

Media moguls open the floodgates

PARIS (AFP) — A spate of multi-million dollar deals in 1995 raises the threat of sport drowning in a lake of television dollars.

The tube is rapidly becoming so important in modern day financing that sports are finding it more and more difficult to retain their independence.

By the end of the century television viewers may have as many as 150 channels to flick through and the media moguls are fighting to get their hands on as many sports as possible to show them.

Jack Welch, chairman of U.S. conglomerate General Electric whose TV network NBC will have spent \$4.728 billion on the Olympics by 2008, is believed to have intervened personally to ensure NBC maintained its baseball coverage.

Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation, owners of Fox Network, had shaken the established broadcasters when it agreed to share its sports interests with the cable group Tele-Communications.

Their move into major league baseball forced NBC and the ESPN sports network, now owned by Walt Disney, to reverse decisions to halt baseball coverage.

The scramble for rights left each of the 24 clubs better off to the tune of \$12 million annually.

GEC, which is setting up a joint venture with Microsoft to produce a 24-hour news channel for the multimedia age, needs as much input as possible.

So NBC signed a \$2.3 billion deal for U.S. broadcasting rights for the Summer Games of 2004 and 2008 and Winter Games of 2006 shortly after agreeing to pay \$715 million for the 2000 Sydney Games and \$555 million for the 2002 Salt Lake City Winter Games.

The Sydney and Salt Lake City package was agreed five days after the International Olympic Committee turned down Fox chairman Chase Carey's \$701 million bid for Sydney.

Francois Carrard, the IOC director general, said the approach to IOC Television Committee President Richard Pound on July 30 in Montreal was not considered a formal bid.

Alex Gilady, involved in the NBC negotiations, said: "Why would the IOC say yes to \$701 million when Fox is the new kid on the block? I don't think the Fox bid was relevant."

Fox has bid \$240 million for the European rights to the Sydney Olympics but are likely to find themselves rejected again as their Sky network in Britain needs a satellite dish — severely limiting the number of people who could watch the Games.

Fox had moved into the big time by snatching up the National Football Conference rights from CBS.

And Murdoch's \$550 million purchase of TV rights for matches between the best teams in rugby union — South Africa, New Zealand and Australia — in May forced that sport to shed its amateur status.

Gilady, NBC sports vice-president since 1981, has been on the IOC Radio and TV Commission since 1985. He was made Israel's IOC member in 1994.

No one from the IOC went back to Fox or even asked CBS, which spent \$918 million for U.S. rights to the 1992, 1994 and 1998 Winter Games, if it wanted to consider bidding.

The IOC has been working with NBC from the 1988 Games in Seoul for which the firm paid \$402 million.

NBC paid \$401 million for the Barcelona Games in 1992 and \$456 million for next year's Atlanta Olympics.

However, future Olympic hosts cannot expect a windfall. The IOC, which will spend 44.8 million Swiss francs (\$38.1 million) on its own running costs in 1996, decided in Japan earlier in December to pass on only 49 per cent to organisers, down from the 60 per cent, from 2004.

The fight for the \$207 million the new arrangement will free has already started.

National Olympic Committees (NOC), who have to raise funds through taxpayers or sponsorship to send teams to the Olympics, say they deserve more than international federations whose main task is to run the competitions.

"European NOCs spent \$75 million sending teams to Barcelona and \$40 million to Albertville in 1992," Jacques Rogge, President of the European Committees Association, said.

International Amateur Athletic Federation President Primo Nebiolo might not agree with that.

Nebiolo was believed to have ganged up with Joao Havelange, Congo's Jean-Claude Ganga and Mexico's Mario Vazquez-Rana to keep Juan Antonio Samaranch as IOC president for another five years.

Havelange has a battle of his own to hang onto power as president of the international football federation (FIFA). Ganga is the man who organised the 1976 Olympic boycott and Vazquez-Rana is president of the Association of National Olympic Committees.

The IOC members raised their retirement age to 80 at their annual meeting in Budapest in June.

The change means the 75-year-old Samaranch, due to retire in 1997, can stand again for a fourth term. Samaranch had earlier failed by two votes to remove the age limit altogether.

He said he would take a final decision at the end of 1996, which would give potential rivals only six months to mount a campaign. Samaranch had two years to run his campaign after Lord Killanin decided to stand down in 1978.

Motor racing is perhaps the most glamorous sport but it is the only one which refuses to disclose prize money.

Bernie Ecclestone, who pulls the strings in Formula One racing, denies he had anything to do with world champion Michael Schumacher's \$27 million move from Benetton to Ferrari.

But Ecclestone, president of the Formula One Constructors' Association since 1975, told the L'Equipe sports newspaper recently:

"Ferrari is Formula One. We could lose McLaren, Williams or Benetton and it wouldn't change much. But Formula One cannot do without Ferrari. If the 'Scuderia' wins it's good for everybody."

The French motoring magazine Sport Auto this month estimated Ferrari's racing budget at \$130 million.

McLaren were next on \$90 million, followed by Williams on \$80 million and Benetton on \$70 million.

Behind every sport, it seems, there is someone waiting to make a deal, and the newest sport on the Olympics illustrates the point.

The winter sports industry, which recognises that snow surfers may be their best chance for growth in coming decades, can thank Japanese businessman Yoshiaki Tsutsumi for mounting the campaign that got the sport onto the 1998 Olympics.

Qadissieh score important win as 15th week kicks off

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — While the 15th week of the Premier League competition does not include any interesting matches, the results may prove to be very crucial to most teams as the struggle has begun on all fronts of the competition.

While four teams vie for the title and are playing for the win, the last five are in another fight to avoid the relegation-threatened last four.

Al Qadissieh Wednesday beat Sahab 2-0 in the opening match of the 15th week to move up three places to third.

Al Ahli, languishing in 9th place Thursday take on fourth place Al Hussein, while al Baqaa, who are out of the last four for now, face Al Jazireh.

In one of three matches scheduled for Friday, titleholders Al Wihdat take on bottom-of-the-table Al Russeifa who are yet to score a win, or draw.

In other matches, current leaders Al Ramtha meet 11th placed Al Jalil while former champs Al Faisali play Kufroum.

Schedule of 15th week

Alhi-Hussein	Thurs. 28/12
Jazireh-Baqaa	Thurs. 28/12
Wihdat-Russeifa	Fri. 29/12
Ramtha-Jalil	Fri. 29/12
Faisali-Kufroum	Fri. 29/12

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competitive auctions. More than a quarter of a century ago, a French theoretician, Jean-Rene Vernes, realized that there was a correlation between the number of trumps in a partnership hand and the number of tricks that could be taken in the play. He formulated the Law. The total number of tricks available on any deal is approximately equal to the total number of trumps both sides have in their combined longest suits.

The Law was largely ignored until Marty Bergen began investigating it, and then introduced it to his partner, Larry Cohen. It helped them become one of the premier pairs in the United States.

Now there's a second book, "Following the Law: The Total Tricks Sequel", by the same author. (Available from Naco Press, \$12.95 plus \$3 postage and handling, 181 Longhill Road, I-6, Little Falls,

N.J. 07424.) It expands on themes introduced in the original work as well as breaking fresh ground. We consider it a must for any serious bridge library. Consider the above hand.

After a spade lead, declarer won and knocked out the trump ace. A spade to the king was the entry for a heart shift, taken by the queen. South couldn't continue hearts profitably and, when the ace of diamonds was knocked out East had a parking place for a heart, and lost only a trick in each suit. However, North-South can make nine tricks in spades.

Where did the Law go wrong? Nowhere. As North, Larry could account for no more than eight spades in the North-South hands and East-West might well have only an eight-card fit. To bid on risked getting doubled for a disastrous 300. It was his partner who knew about the nine-tricks in the combined hands and, despite a dead minimum opening bid, should have competed with three spades.



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Pacers halt Bulls winning streak

INDIANAPOLIS (AP) — The Chicago Bulls came up one victory short of the longest winning streak in franchise history, losing to Indiana 103-97 Tuesday night for their first defeat in 14 games.

The Pacers, who stretched their home winning streak in seven games, held off a Chicago charge in the fourth quarter when Scottie Pippen scored 15 of his 26 points.

The Bulls, who fell behind by as many as 24 in the first half, cut their deficit to 97-94 on a driving layup by Pippen. Mark Jackson responded with a 3-pointer to give Indiana a 100-94 edge with 34.8 seconds remaining, and the Bulls never drew closer than five points again.

Rik Smits led the Pacers with 26 points. Reggie Miller scored 20 and Jackson finished with 13 points and 10 assists.

Michael Jordan matched his average of 30 points but shot just 11-of-28 from the field.

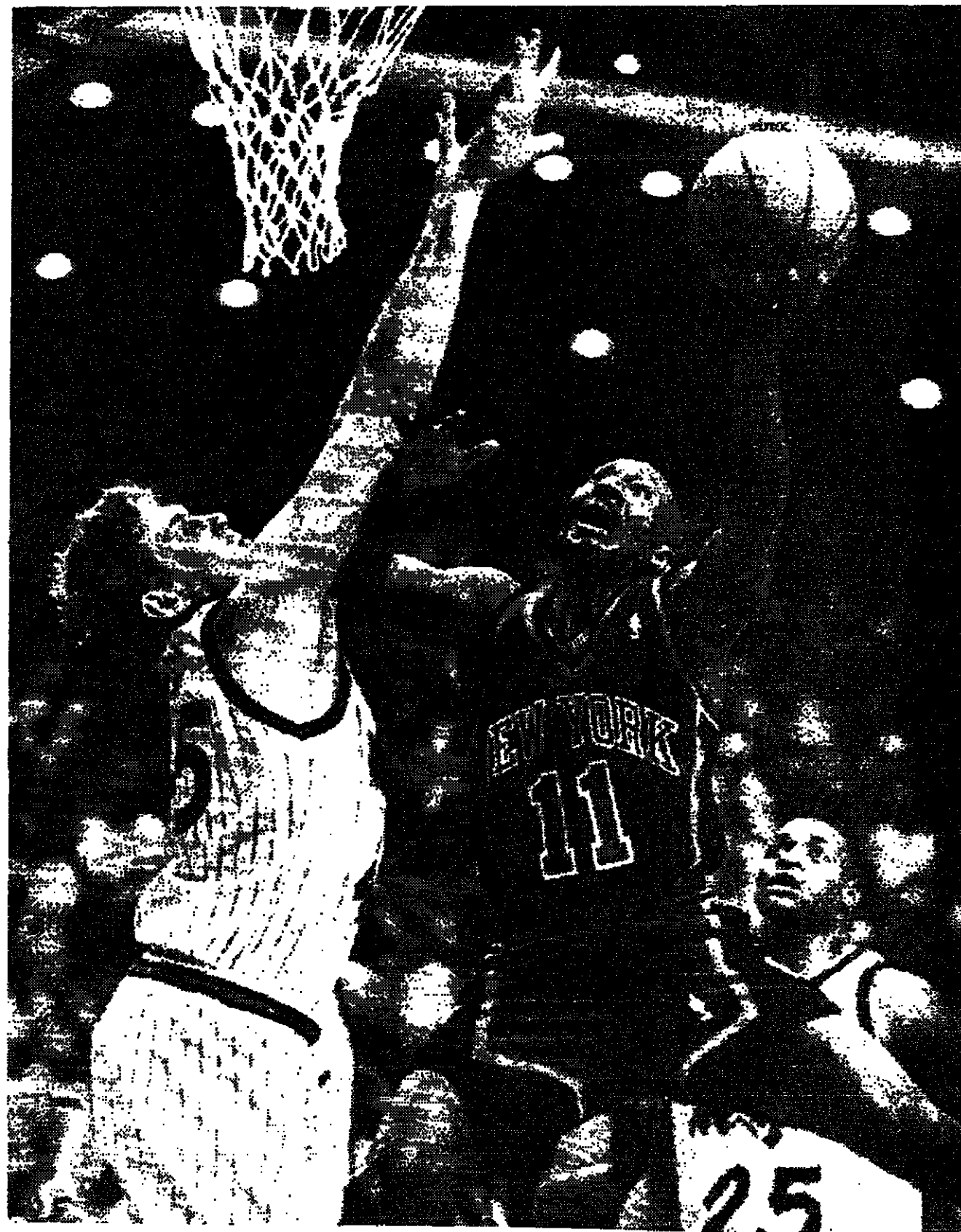
Rockets 100, Grizzlies 84: In Houston, Hakeem Olajuwon scored 18 points as Houston ended a two-game losing skid with a victory over Vancouver.

Mario Elie, starting in place of injured guard Clyde Drexler, added 16 points for Houston, which appeared on its way to a rout early in the game but failed to put Vancouver away until the final two minutes.

Eric Murdock led the expansion Grizzlies with 16 points, while Bryant Reeves added 12 points and 16 rebounds.

Byron Scott's layup with about seven minutes remaining made it 72-69 before consecutive baskets by the Rockets' Sam Cassell and Mark Bryant and Eldridge Recasner's 3-pointer snuffed out the Grizzlies' final threat.

Heat 96, Nets 93: In Miami, Hilly Owens, in his first night back after missing 10 games with a shoulder bruise, scored a career-high 31 points to lead Miami over New



New York Knicks guard Derek Harper (11) goes to the basket against Orlando Magic center Jon Koncak (45) during second quarter NBA action in the Orlando Arena (Reuters photo)

during second quarter NBA action in the Orlando Arena (Reuters photo)

RESULTS

Toronto	93	Milwaukee	87
Miami	96	New Jersey	93
Atlanta	94	L.A. Clippers	88
Detroit	100	Golden State	90
Indiana	103	Chicago	97
Houston	100	Vancouver	84
Denver	114	Dallas	102
Utah	114	Portland	104
L.A. Lakers	102	Boston	91
Sacramento	115	San Antonio	98

Prince Hassan inaugurates squash centre

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan Wednesday opened the Kingdom's newest sports facility, the Al Hussein Squash Centre at Al Hussein Youth City.

The Crown Prince congratulated squash fans in particular and the Kingdom's sports enthusiasts in general on the opening of the new centre.

Considered to be one of the most highly sophisticated squash arenas of the region, Jordan's newest sports facility offers six courts including two centre courts seating 700 and 200 spectators respectively.

The centre added a vital sports facility to Al Hussein Youth City which includes the capital's only international soccer stadium as well as the Sports Palace court which hosts volleyball, basketball, handball and other competitions.

The Hassan Squash Centre will soon be hosting the 8th Asian Squash Championship which opens in Amman Jan. 8.

Thirteen Asian nations will be converging on Amman starting Jan. 6 to take part in the competition.



His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan Wednesday opens the Kingdom's newest sports facility — Al Hussein Squash Centre.

The teams represent Bahrain, Hong Kong, India, South Korea, Kuwait, Lebanon, Malaysia, Pakistan, Palestine, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Taiwan and Jordan.

Prince Hassan underlined the significance of hosting such a regional championship, a fact that displayed Jordan's unique-

ness. The Crown Prince also stressed the importance of opening squash courts in the Kingdom's different governorates.

Minister of Youth Awad Khleifat also expressed his pride in opening the centre and Jordan's hosting of the Asian Championship.

"Prince Hassan has al-

ways supported Jordanian youth and sports and we only hope our players will give the best they have and accomplish good results," the minister said.

During the 10-day long championship, the general assembly of the Asian Squash Federation will hold its meeting in Amman.

Casartelli death mars cycling year

PARIS (AP) — Although Miguel Indurain won the Tour de France for a record fifth straight year, the death of Italian cyclist Fabio Casartelli on a mountain descent cast a shadow over the sport in 1995.

Casartelli died from fatal head injuries after he crashed during a high-speed descent on a mountain pass in the Pyrenees July 18, becoming the third rider killed in the history of the Tour de France.

Casartelli's death renewed debate on mandatory wearing of helmets, but the issue was not resolved as many riders continued to go without them. Still, the image of Casartelli lying on his right side in a fetal position, blood pouring from his head, was a longer-lasting image than Indurain riding down the Champs Elysees in the Yellow Jersey for the fifth consecutive time.

Although Belgian Eddy Merckx, Frenchmen Jacques Anquetil and Bernard Hinault have also won five tours, Indurain was the first who did it in consecutive years, a remarkable consistency in a sport where falls, illness or split-second decisions are costly.

Indurain's winning margin this year was 4 minutes, 35 seconds over Swiss Alex Zülle, smaller than the year before. Still, there was little doubt Indurain was the dominant rider from the start. Zülle was the fifth



A French doctor gives first aid to Italian cyclist Fabio Casartelli after he crashed July 18 in the photo. The cyclist later died in hospital (AFP downhill part of the 15th stage of the Tour de France).

different runner-up in the tour behind Indurain.

Indurain later won the individual time trial at the World Cycling Championships in Bogota, Colombia. He finished second in the road race behind Spanish teammate Abraham Olano.

About the only thing left for Indurain to do is win an Olympic gold medal. Professional cyclists will be eligible to compete next year in Atlanta for the first time.

Indurain's rivals next

year will be thinking of how to stop him from winning his sixth tour. It will be difficult to find a challenger.

Swiss Tony Tominger, who won this year's Italian Giro in June, and Italians Gianni Bugno and Claudio Chiappucci all appear to be on the downside of their careers after each had a second place finish behind Indurain earlier in the 1990s.

Piotr Ugrumov of Latvia was second in 1994 but didn't start this year's tour.

American Lance Armstrong, who won an emotional stage after Casartelli's death, may be a force in the future but still finished almost 90 minutes behind Indurain in the final standings.

Laurent Jalabert of France won more than 20 races throughout this season, including Paris-Sau Remo and the Spanish Vuelta, but didn't even make the podium in the Tour de France, winding up fourth.

Will 20-year Sydney-Hobart race record fall? The weatherman offers no hope

SYDNEY (AP) — Twenty years ago, the lead yacht in the annual Sydney-to-Hobart ocean race caught freakishly strong tail winds and let its spinnaker sail billow out like a parachute, towing it full speed ahead.

The prolonged spinnaker run left American skipper Jim Kilroy wind-surf to the finish line in Tasmania in 2 days 14 hours 36 minutes 56 seconds in the U.S. maxi-yacht Kialoa III, a record that still stands two decades later.

Most sports speed records in sports are broken within weeks, or at the next annual race, but the Kialoa's record dash over 1,168 kilometres (630 nautical miles) in the world's mightiest deep-water yacht race has endured.

This year, however, another American yacht built with the latest cutting-edge technology hopes to take line honours and break the record, even if wind conditions are more fickle.

Sayonara, a maxi-yacht out

of San Francisco owned by Oracle computer company chief executive Larry Ellison and skippered by Geoff Stagg, is a 64-foot favourite to win the 51st running of the race, bookies say.

"We aim to be there in 2 1/2 days," said Billy Erskens, Sayonara's sailing master.

But meteorologist Ken Batt on Sunday said competitors will have their work cut out again this year and should expect sea breezes in the first few days rather than favourable tail winds from the north.

Race sponsor Telstra will pay a bonus of \$187,500 (250,000 Australian dollars) if the winning yacht sets a record.

Launched only last April, the 23.8 metres Sayonara has already built credibility by breaking the 15-year-old Oakland-to-Catalina race record in its debut.

A humble deck hand on the Sayonara has attracted as much attention as the boat itself: News Corp. media

friend of Ellison, who sailed his own wooden ketch Ilna four times in the race in the 1960s. Murdoch quipped that his role on the Sayonara is "tailwind."

No nautical dilettante, Murdoch brought the Ilna into Hobart in second place in 1964.

Murdoch "blooded" the Sayonara last Thursday during a time-up race on the hazy, after the race, he reached up to grab onto a line, and the rope pulled his hand into a pulley, gashing his right index finger.

After some minor surgery to mend the wound, the 64-year-old Murdoch told reporters he still intended to sail on Tuesday.

Aussie partisans are hoping the down-under maxi-yacht Brindabella will edge out the Sayonara. Last year, the 22.9-metre (75 1/2-foot) Brindabella battled neck-and-neck all the way with the

yacht Tasmania, finishing second by only 7 minutes.

Fudge, the largest ocean racing yacht in the world at 25.8 metres (85 feet), is drawing 8/1 odds, with its age being against it. It was originally built in 1990 as Matador 2 for America's Cup winner Bill Koch, and now is owned by Aussie Anton Starling.

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Giants cancel season tickets

EAST RUTHERFORD (R) — The New York giants said on Tuesday they have canceled season tickets held by about 75 fans whose stadium seats were used by fans who threw icy snowballs in a game on Saturday between the giants and the San Diego Chargers.

Chargers' equipment manager Sid Brooks was knocked unconscious when he was hit on the side of the head by icy snowball.

After Brooks was hit, referee Ron Blum warned fans that the game would be forfeited if the snowball-throwing continued. Brooks has since recovered.

Fourteen people were arrested and nearly 200 were ejected as fans at Giants Stadium pelted the field with snowballs in New York's 27-17 loss to the Chargers. Fifteen people were treated for injuries.

Robert Mulcahy, the head of the New Jersey Sports and Exposition Authority, which runs Giants' stadium, provided a list of approximately 75 ticket locations of those who were ejected from the game and a \$1,000 reward to the first person who can identify a fan who was photographed throwing a snowball.

"People pay good money to come to Giants stadium to enjoy a football game," said Giants' president Wellington Mara.

"They do not pay to subject themselves to possible physical harm or verbal abuse."

Stadium officials shoveled the snow out of the aisles in between the seats, giving the fans the opportunity to throw the snowballs.

Cardinals fire head coach

In Phoenix, Arizona, Brash Buddy Ryan, who compiled a 12-20 record in two years as head coach of the Arizona Cardinals, was fired on Tuesday as their coach.

The Cardinals finished 4-12 this season after being routed, 37-13, by the Dallas Cowboys Monday night in their season finale. It was Arizona's fourth consecutive loss.

It took just two seasons for the outspoken and controversial Ryan to wear out his welcome in Phoenix. The 61-year-old Ryan had promised a winning team and a Super Bowl when he was named head coach of the Cardinals in 1994.

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Kabariti: Peace between Syria, Lebanon and Israel bound to improve relations within region

DOHA (Petra) — Jordan believes that peace agreement between Israel and Syria and Lebanon are bound to open the door for the establishment of stronger and more sound and in-depth relations among countries of the Middle East region, according to Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti.

In an interview with the Qatari daily Al Rayah published Wednesday, the minister expressed hope that Damascus and Tel Aviv will be able to overcome the procedural obstacles and enter into practical details to arrive at an agreement that would end the Israeli-Syrian conflict and open the road for an Israeli-Lebanese settlement on the basis of U.N. Security Council Resolution 245.

Asked about the media crisis with Syria, Mr. Kabariti said that the crisis has been contained, adding that his meeting with the Syrian Foreign Minister offered an opportunity for clarifying the Jordanian position, stressing that Jordan was always clear in supporting the Syrian position and in giving impetus to the peace process.

The minister said that Jordan has the sincere desire to maintain excellent relations

with Syria based on mutual respect.

Referring to relations with Iraq, Mr. Kabariti said that Jordan is concerned over Iraq's unity and territorial integrity and is keen on ending the suffering of the Iraqi people — a feeling emanating from Jordan's belief that as a sister Arab state with great potential, Iraq can play its role on the Arab arena.

He said that federation among the three components of the Iraqi society is possible solution for retaining the country's unity but is only one of several proposals that the Iraqis must consider.

The Minister stressed that it will be completely up to the Iraqi people to determine their future.

In reply to a question, Mr. Kabariti said Jordan has no intention of closing its borders with Iraq, adding that Jordan has never resorted to subjecting its borders and its economic relations with other countries to political stands.

Referring to the recent arms shipment destined for Iraq and intercepted at Amman Airport, the minister said that once the shipment was seized, Jordan informed Rolf Ekeus, the special U.N. envoy on disarming Iraq.

"Two days ago similar equipment were found to have been dumped in the Tigris river and these two have been seized by Ekeus and his team in Baghdad," said the minister, who added: "This can only mean that there still exists a commercial route for supplying Iraq with banned merchandise."

Answering a question about a confederation with the Palestine National Authority, he said: "Jordan will not discuss this subject until the Palestinians have become capable of exercising their full rights on their own homeland and established their own independent state on the Palestinian soil and solved all the outstanding problems, especially the refugee problem."

Referring to Hamas, the minister said that Jordan has no reason to expelling Hamas leaders from Amman stressing that they are only media representatives and their presence is governed by Jordanian and international laws.

Denying the existence of a political crisis with Iran, the minister said "there was a problem which has been dealt with," expressing hope that Iranian-Jordanian relations will in the future be developed on clear basis of mutual respect and non-interference in each other's internal affairs.

In his interview, Mr. Kabariti called for the return to the Arab summit institution to help reunite Arab ranks.

Jordan has always sought to establish strong ties among Arab states adding that Jordan has responded favourably to any call for healing inter-Arab rifts and for establishing at least the minimum level of solidarity among Arab countries.

Referring to Yemen, he said, Jordan support Yemen in its drive to settle the crisis with Eritrea and in finding a diplomatic solution to the problem.

With reference to Kuwait, the minister said that Jordan had done what it believed to be required from it. He expressed hope that Kuwait would respond favourably to Jordan's positive and great steps towards reconciliation.

He said: "We understand the feelings of the Kuwaiti people. We ourselves had suffered from threats to our national security and we do realise the extent of the consequences of such threats."

Iran hosts Turkish, Syrian officials for talks on Iraq

TEHRAN (AFP) — Senior officials from Iran, Syria and Turkey are holding talks in Tehran on security issues and the situation in neighbouring Iraq, officials said Wednesday.

The two-day meeting between the three countries' deputy foreign ministers began Tuesday, they said.

Discussions were expected to revolve around the situation in Kurdish-controlled northern Iraq, notably a "proposal" by His Majesty King Hussein, the officials said, without elaborating.

Jordan, which has distanced itself from the govern-

ment in Baghdad, recently called on Iraqi opposition groups to meet to decide the future of their country.

King Hussein has also proposed that the establishment of a confederation in Iraq would be preferable to the country splitting itself apart along ethnic lines.

In a meeting with Turkish and Syrian delegations on Wednesday, Iranian Foreign Minister Ali Akbar Velayati warned against "possible" efforts to carve up Iraq.

"Any probable plan to disintegrate Iraq is dangerous for peace and stability in the region," he told the official

Iranian news agency IRNA.

The talks are to pave the way for a meeting between the foreign ministers of Iran, Syria and Turkey in Istanbul in March on the situation in northern Iraq.

The three countries, all having their own sizeable Kurdish minorities, are strongly opposed to the creation of a separate Kurdish state in Iraq.

Their foreign ministers have held regular consultations twice a year since the 1991 Gulf war, which drove Iraq out of Kuwait and led to a Kurdish uprising in northern Iraq.

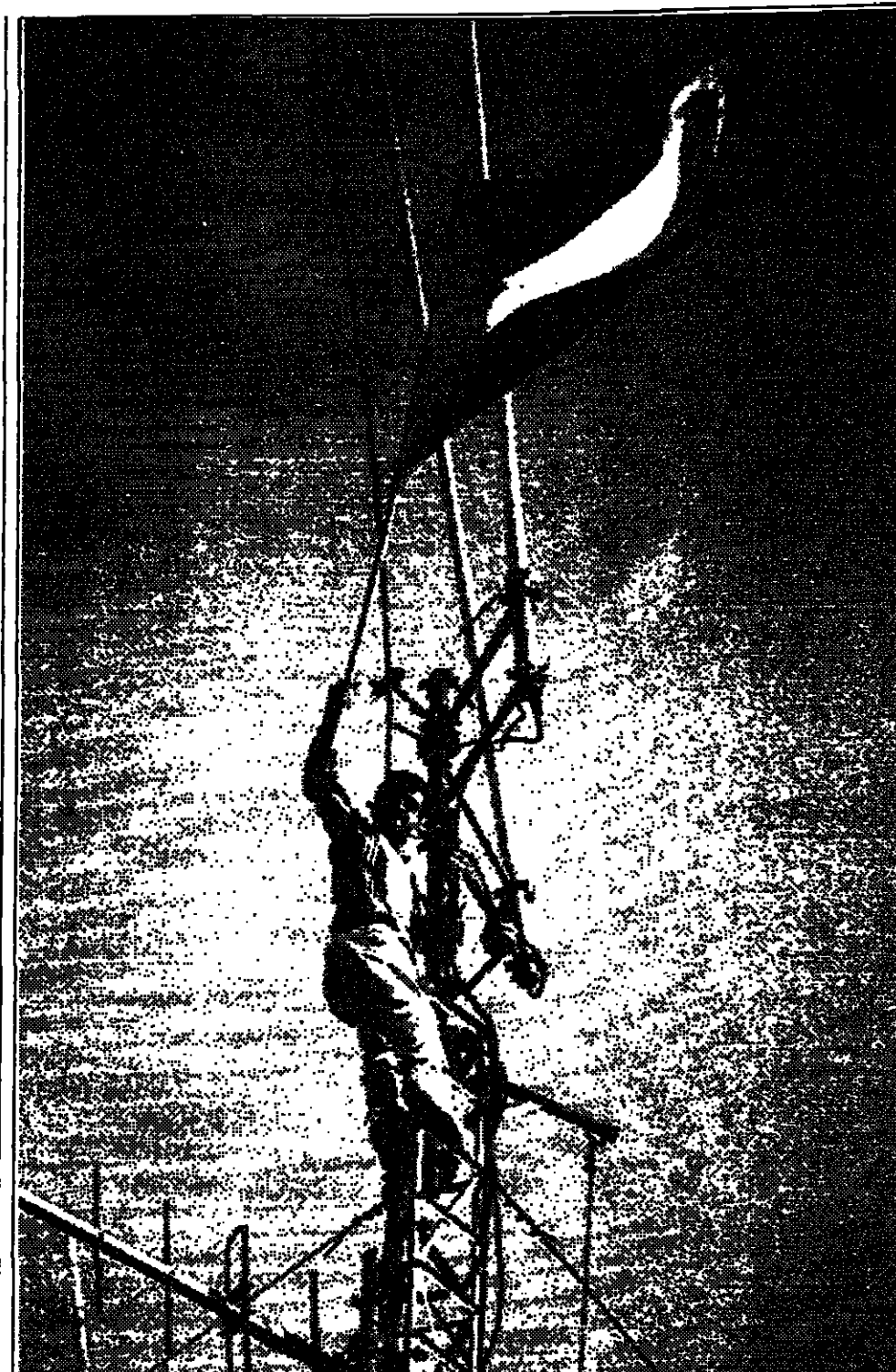
Babel denies report on banned chemicals

BAGHDAD (AFP) — An Iraqi newspaper on Wednesday denied a report that Jordan had seized several kilograms of dangerous chemicals and a machine tool destined for Baghdad for possible use in the production of weapons.

The daily newspaper Babel, run by President Saddam Hussein's son, Uday, ran a news agency report on the seizure of chemicals and a machine tool capable of manufacturing weapons.

The newspaper headlined the story "New lies" but made no other comment on the report which quoted Jordanian customs officers as saying the haul contained three highly noxious chemical components which had been imported from a European country by an Iraqi businessman passing them off as pesticides. Other Iraqi newspapers did not report the story.

Jordanian authorities seized last month a machine tool capable of fabricating different weapons, including missiles, which was due to be transported to Iraq, they said.



ISRAEL EVACUATES RAMALLAH: A Palestinian hoists a flag on top of a military building's communications tower after Israeli troops pulled out of the West Bank city of Ramallah Wednesday (see story on Page 1) (Reuters photo)

Kozyrev to visit Afghanistan to negotiate hostages' release

MOSCOW (Agencies) — Russian President Boris Yeltsin on Wednesday instructed Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev to visit Kandahar in southern Afghanistan following talks with Islamic rebels holding seven Russian hostages, ITAR-TASS news agency reported.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Grigory Karasin, quoted by ITAR-TASS, said Mr. Yeltsin told Mr. Kozyrev to "visit Kandahar and on the way Islamabad, to hold talks with the Pakistani leadership."

He did not say when the visit would take place.

The Russian crew of an Ilyushin-76 plane have been held by the Taliban radical Islamic rebel group since it was forced to land Aug. 3 while allegedly on its way to Kabul with military equipment for the government.

Last week a spokesman for the ministry for emergencies here said Russian officials, including a medical team, had left for Kandahar "with the aim of evacuating the hostages."

However, only a preliminary accord had been reached

with the Taliban and there was no confirmation that the release would go ahead, the spokesman said.

There were also no details on whether a ransom was being paid, or any other deal.

Mr. Yeltsin on Wednesday approved the foreign ministry's efforts to secure the hostages' release, Mr. Karasin said.

The Taliban rebels impounded the cargo plane with about 30 tonnes of AK-47 rifle ammunition on board after it was forced down by a Taliban fighter jet.

The Russian government denied any connection with the affair and said the plane's owners, Airstan, had ignored advice not to fly in the area.

One of the Taliban's main demands has been that Moscow provide a list of those still missing from the Soviet-Afghan war before it releases the Russian hostages.

The Taliban believe that Afghans who disappeared during the war against the former Soviet Union from 1979 and 1989 may have been taken to Russia, and may still be there.

Meanwhile, rebel forces attacked Afghanistan's capital Kabul with rockets, destroying two houses and hitting an embassy compound but causing no casualties, the Iranian News Agency IRNA said on Wednesday.

The agency, monitored in Nicosia, quoted an Afghan defence ministry source as saying the Taliban Islamic militia fired at least eight Katyusha rockets from the south of the besieged city into central Kabul on Tuesday.

At least two rockets hit the Libyan embassy compound in the Wazir Akbar Khan district, it said in a report from Kabul.

"The shelling caused no casualties," it said.

Taliban has besieged Kabul since early October, vowing to oust President Burhanuddin Rabbani and install a purist Islamic order throughout Afghanistan.

Official Kabul radio said earlier this week that the rebel militia killed 12 people and wounded 19 in weekend rocket attacks on residential areas.

COLUMN

Lonely princess Diana visits therapist - papers

LONDON (R) — Britain's Princess Diana visited a health therapist to cheer herself up after spending Christmas day watching television at home on her own, newspapers reported. Diana left her Kensington Palace apartment for the North London home of 49-year-old Susie Orbach — the psychotherapist she turns to in times of trouble, the daily mirror said. The rest of the royal family including her estranged husband Prince Charles and sons Princes William and Harry were at Queen Elizabeth's Sandringham estate in east-England for Christmas.

Flash Harry wins Kenyan ostrich race

NAIROBI, Kenya (R) — Kenya staged its first ostrich race on Boxing Day, with Flash Harry taking track honours in a 200 metre sprint. Six riders and their birds battled it out on the Ngong racecourse on the outskirts of Nairobi to the amusement of a crowd of Christmas holidaymakers. "I'm Flash Harry, I'm number one, I'm the winner — these all go together," said the winning jockey, who said he shared the name of his mount. The other birds were Lucky Legs, Maasai Moran, Cavorting, Crusader, Prancing, Percy and Horrible Horace.

Christmas of alleged mafia boss ends with arrest

CREMONA, Italy (R) — The desire of a fugitive mafia boss to spend Christmas with his family led to his arrest, police said. Eugenio Barresi, 35, was arrested on Christmas eve at the home of a friend as he celebrated with his wife and two small children. Investigators tracked him down after finding his family had travelled from the Sicilian city Messina to an area outside the northern town of Cremona. Police said Barresi, alleged boss of a mafia group in Messina, had been a fugitive since June, 1994.

Man drives wrong way on motorway on three wheels

LONDON (R) — A 65-year-old Briton was arrested after driving the wrong way along a motorway for 16 km with a wheel missing from his car. Police said the unnamed man was travelling at 80 km per hour on the motorway west of London, with sparks flying from the hub of his front offside wheel. He only stopped when police put spikes across the motorway to puncture his remaining tyres and his car careened into the back of a police vehicle.

Texas boy shoots man in hunt for Nintendo games

FORT HANCOCK, Texas (R) — A man was critically wounded on Christmas day when a 13-year-old boy fired a rifle at a truck in hopes it would spill out Nintendo games, police said. "He figured maybe all trucks were carrying toys," Hudspeth County Sheriff's Department dispatcher Jorge Chavez said. Chavez said the truck was picked at random by the boy, who was being held on charges of juvenile delinquency and faced up to 10 years in prison if convicted. The boy fired three shots at the tyres of the truck on Interstate 10 in Fort Hancock, Texas. He missed but hit the driver of a passing car in the head.

10 rebels killed in Algiers

PARIS (Agencies) — Algerian security forces have killed 10 Muslim guerrillas in Algiers while a car bomb exploded in a northeastern town killing one person and wounding eight, Algerian newspapers reported Wednesday.

La Tribune daily said police backed by crack troops ended a 20-hour hostage taking operation in downtown Algiers Tuesday, killing three suspected militants and freeing the hostage, a child, unharmed.

The three men tried to exact a ransom from a trader in the busy street of Didouche Mourad but the trader foiled the attempt and

managed to alert the security forces, it said.

The three assaults then took to a house nearby and seized the child. The security forces later stormed the house killing the militants and freeing the hostage, La Tribune said.

The paper said in another incident Tuesday, security forces shot dead seven guerrillas in a gunbattle in Annassers suburb of Algiers.

Also Wednesday, the Algerian press reported that one person was killed and eight injured in a bombblast in a bar overnight Tuesday at Tizi Ouzou, east of Algiers.

Rabin's widow to write memoirs

JERUSALEM (AP) — Yitzhak Rabin's widow said Wednesday she wants to write a book about her life with the prime minister.

"This is the most important thing to me, to sum up this chapter of my life with Yitzhak, the bitter and the obvious conclusions," Leah Rabin said on Israel army radio, answering questions by listeners.

"It was something I intended to do anyway, even before Yitzhak was murdered. I just didn't have the trigger, something to push me especially," Mrs. Rabin said. "Now I have one."

Mr. Rabin was killed Nov. 4 by a Jewish militant who hoped to wreck Israel-PLO peacemaking.

Mrs. Rabin, 67, said Wednesday she would start writing once she has answered a flood of condolence letters. It was not clear if she already had a publisher.

Her granddaughter, Noa Ben-Artzi, 18, has sold the rights of her memoirs to the Alfred A. Knopf Company. Ben-Artzi, who will write under the name Noa Rabin,

has reportedly received an advance of nearly \$1 million for the 200-page book due out in April.

An earlier memoir by Leah Rabin, "All the Time My Wife," has been published in Hebrew.

Since her husband's death, Mrs. Rabin has been busy attending ceremonies in the prime minister's memory. Earlier this week, the government said it would give her an office, a car and driver to help her in her public activities.

Mrs. Rabin, 67, was born in Germany and immigrated to Israel in 1933. She married Mr. Rabin in August 1948.

During Wednesday's army radio broadcast, Mrs. Rabin also complimented PLO chief Yasser Arafat who paid her a condolence visit after the assassination.

"He came to our home with so much warmth, so much friendship, so much charm. This person has something very, very authentic," Mrs. Rabin said. "He is one of those leaders, like Rabin, that don't try to find favour, that say this is me, take me or leave me."

Turkish writer gets five-year sentence

ISTANBUL (R) — A Turkish court on Wednesday sentenced a Turkish sociologist to five years in prison for "separatist propaganda" because of 15 books and one article on the country's Kurdish minority, his publishing house said.

Former university professor Ismail Besikci, already in jail because of other sentences stemming from his writings, was found guilty under article of the anti-terror law in a rehearing of some of the cases against him.

The Turkish parliament in October amended the law and people sentenced under the original law, like Mr. Besikci, get a retrial.

The amendments, made shortly before the European Parliament was to vote on a customs union with Ankara, reduced the maximum penalty to three years from five and required courts to prove intent.

Human rights activists have argued the amendments were little more than cosmetic.

NATO: Bosnian warring factions making progress towards deadline

SARAJEVO, Bosnia-Herzegovina (AP) — Government and Serb forces made good progress Wednesday towards their first deadline in the Bosnian peace agreement, moving soldiers from the Sarajevo area, NATO officials said.

The actual deadline for both sides to remove troops and weapons from 38 designated areas in the Sarajevo region, mark or remove mines, was midnight (2300 GMT) Wednesday — a week after NATO formally took control in Bosnia from the United Nations.

French NATO soldiers were moving in along the front lines to keep the two sides apart.

Also on Wednesday, Bosnian army officials cited reports that several houses were set on fire overnight in Serb-held districts southwest of the Sarajevo. They also warned against any NATO compromise with the Bosnian Serbs that would delay the Serb withdrawal from parts of Sarajevo they control.

Vehicles packed with personal belongings were seen Wednesday heading from a Serb-held Sarajevo suburb into areas that will remain

under Serb control. It was unclear whether this was an early sign of what Serb officials want will be an exodus of people unwilling to submit to a Muslim-led government.

In the hotly contested suburb of Dobrinja on Wednesday, a French armoured personnel carrier patrolled the former front line, accompanied by five soldiers on foot and a dog. The French placed barbed wire along sides of the street where the front line once was, searched for mines and marked them.

Soldiers stopped and crouched down every 50 metres to watch and listen.

"This mission would have been impossible three weeks ago," said one of the soldiers, who added that soldiers from both sides had left during the past three days.

NATO spokesman said the troop withdrawal was going well, but whether there would be 100 per cent compliance at the deadline was unclear.

"The compliance has been most satisfactory," said Capt. Frederic Solano, a French spokesman. "The midnight deadline should see most elements completed, although there might well be a small

overspill with a few tasks to be completed tomorrow."

Another spokesman, Lt. Col. Mark Rayner, later told reporters that "everything should be completed by tonight."

The midnight deadline was the first in a series within the Bosnia peace agreement signed Dec. 14 in Paris.

There is a separate series of deadlines built into the agreement for the Serbs to turn over Sarajevo districts they control to the Bosnian government, beginning Jan. 19 and concluding two months later.

Bosnian Serb leaders Tuesday told NATO commander U.S. Adm. Leighton Smith that the deadlines were too soon. In a meeting at Bosnian Serb headquarters in Pale, southeast of Sarajevo, they cautioned Adm. Smith that the success of his peace mission might hinge on an extension.

Adm. Smith said he made no promises, but would consider their demand.

Momcilo Krajisnik, a senior Bosnian Serb official who met with Adm. Smith, indicated many of the tens of thousands of people living in Serb-held districts of the

capital and suburbs may leave rather than submit to a Muslim-led government.

On Wednesday, AP reporter Tony Smith in the Serb-held suburb of Ilidza west of Sarajevo, saw about 100 vehicles heading east into areas not to be transferred to the government. Many of the cars pulled trailers, one car had an overturned bathtub and skis on its roof rack.

French spokesman Col. Richard Pernod said it was "not clear to us whether, perhaps, they are preparing to leave at a later date, or perhaps, they are just moving out their possessions as a safety measure."

Bosnian Serb officials appear to be using the fear of civilians to try to wrest concessions out of the new NATO mission. Although Mr. Krajisnik did not specify what might happen if thousands started to flee, Serb anger could cause some to try to slow down or sabotage the agreement.

At minimum, a mass departure of Serbs from the Sarajevo area would increase ethnic separation rather than reassemble communities separated by 3½ years of war.